Kansutoppu!

(かんすとっぷ!)

Arc 06

Rachimu

(ラチム)

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Original Story can be found here: Link

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Chapter 32: My Pride

The road ahead of us was wide enough for a lot of people to walk on it at once.

Thing is, there were so many people that I can’t move around easily.

If someone bumped into you they would just click their tongue and move on.

(TL:迎え から 来る 人 にぶつかっ て 舌打ちさ れ た。)

The buildings here were about 4 or 5 floors tall, and the gaudy shops were so over the top you couldn’t tell what they sold.

Even so, this place has a pretty townscape.

It’s a large enough city that you may not find your way back to your inn if you got lost.

That’s how I feel about this place, the Imperial Capital.

“Well then, we’ll part ways here. That was a good journey.”

“Yes. Thank you very much, for various things.”

Seigel waved his right hand at us as he walked away.

He was a conceited guy right up to the end.

Though it seems Roel somehow admires him.

I won’t lose.

“Let’s go to the festival now! I’m pretty sure the street stalls are somewhere around here.”

Cynthia disappeared into the crowd as she said that.

“Well then…let’s go to the guild and get this settled.”

“Good idea. I wonder if we’ve reached B rank?”

We need to hurry and reach B rank.

I need to be at least A rank to get into Ikana Village.

Relying on the map Seigel gave us we headed to the Adventurers Guild.

We wandered for a while without finding it. Somehow we had passed it without noticing.

The door wasn’t the same as the one Kwimill’s guild had, instead of a small wooden door it was a 3 meter wide glass door.

It looked like a 5 floor hotel from the outside.

Upon entering we saw a large counter manned by many staff members.

Kwimill only had one person, Rintei, working while this place had an innumerable amount.

Roel looked like her soul had been extracted.

Of course she would be surprised at this.

…No wait, she's just looking at the Royal Jelly.

She was doing just fine earlier…

"The escort quest from Kwimill? Yes, this way please. This is your reward for completing it."

I'm glad that we got the reward, but I still haven't heard the important part.

"How much more do we need to reach B rank?"

"Aah?"

He seemed really annoyed as he looked over a bunch of papers.

This person was really blunt, unlike the polite Rintei.

"Did you just reach C rank? You need to get at least three times as many achievements to reach B rank."

"Achievements?"

"Yes, yes. Now move that way please, the person behind you is waiting."

His hands were doing the "shoo, shoo" motion as he drove us away.

What's with that guy? Why was he so rude?

"It seems we were slowing things down. There's a lot of people waiting."

Adventurers were lining up behind us, and we could see lines of them waiting on the counters on either side of us.

"This quest is for B ranks, we just need to enter a mountain and get some mithril ore. No problem."

"Yosh, it was worth rising up to B rank!"

(TL:よし、Bランクに上がった甲斐があったぞ)

There were three men and a woman in a party all talking in an amicable tone.

They've reached B rank while we're still C rank.

Just what kind of achievement did they accomplish?

“That’s right! Ryua-chan, it’s been a long time since we last measured our levels. Perhaps you’ll be able to figure out your level now!”

“Ah. You’ve got a point. Let’s see, which way is it?”

There were too many passageways so I couldn’t tell which way it was.

Roel just started walking, it doesn’t seem like she minds getting lost.

It’s her first time here as well but she seems to know the way.

“You can see signboards on the ceiling, they tell you where to go.”

Now that she mentions it, I notice something written up there.

I don’t understand the characters since I can’t read.

I was only recently able to grasp the basics of the written language but I still can’t read very much.

I’m really bad at studying. I get attacked by sleepiness when I start.

We entered a room where a large number of <Level Checker>s were lined up. This amount is incomparable to what we saw in Kwimill. I had been calling them iron boxes so far since that’s what they looked like, but apparently they have a name.

“Level 34!? Even though I’m as strong as an A rank…”

The adventurer seemed disheartened from the <Level Checker>s result.

I wonder if that person is also B rank?

“How about taking the A rank Status Up examination this year? You worked hard since last year in preparation right?

The person’s friend talked about the examination I heard about before.

For some reason I feel a chill when I hear about the examination.

“You’ve got a point…but you know, passing or failing that test doesn’t really reflect the examinee’s capabilities. Even though I’m not an A rank I’m still a splendid adventurer.”

(TL:今のAランクはそこまでご立派なのかねー)

“That train of thought will keep you at B rank for a long time.”

Saying that, a man came out from the <Level Checker> beside the two people with a cold stare.

His muscles are big but not quite as large as Grundom’s.

He had an intimidating and stiff face, his eyes were narrow, and his mouth was in a “へ” shape.

“Geh! It’s Hekaton the <Crusher>…”

“With such a renowned A rank entering the Tougi Taikai tomorrow it really makes you rethink your chances of winning…I can at least hope to enter the semi-finals.”

On Hekaton’s back there was a massive hammer.

It has more impact than Gantetsu’s axe.

“That’s impossible for you guys.”

The two adventurers couldn’t rebuke his words.

I must be mortifying to hear someone say something like that to you.

“Let’s see…my level is…54? Looks like it increased again.”

He seemed disappointed as he said that. I can’t remember if his name was Hekaton or Dokapon but just because he’s an A rank doesn’t mean you should be allowed to brag so much.

Well, since once of the people he mocked had said “many years” he’s probably been A rank for a while.

“If you’re more than just talk, enter the Tougi Taikai. The reception desk is open till late tonight so you have time. Though since you’re a B rank with no nerve I wonder if you’ll muster up the courage by then? Hahahahaha!”

Hekaton walked away with heavy steps as he spouted those words.

“That was surprising…I didn’t expect someone like the <Crusher> to be here.”

“Roel, do you know that guy?”

“He’s one of the elite A rankers, same as Seigel but not as strong. He’s still famous though. That hammer of his is made of orihalcon and can smash even magic barriers, hence his nickname <Crusher>. I haven’t heard many rumors about him though…”

“Due to that it seems he’s very conceited.”

Though, we’ve spent enough time here. Where is that reception desk again?

Since I’m entering the Tougi Taikai I need to sign up at the desk or else I can’t participate…

“Roel, I need to sign up at the reception desk for the event, right?”

“Yup. Let’s see…I’m sure it was on the way to the castle…”

We checked the pamphlet we had recieved earlier to confirm where the castle was.

It only had a map but the Imperial Capital was so big it could make you dizzy. There was sectors like A and B, and although I understood terms like that, just sector A alone was bigger than Kwimill.

Let’s see, from the guild which is here to our destination which is there we need to turn here and then…

"Agh! I give up!"

"Hold on, don't just throw away the pamphlet…"

I realized I could hear laughter. It was the two adventurers from earlier.

"For your own sakes, don't enter the Tougi Taikai this year. It's just a warning out of concern for you, but it's honestly a waste of time. Since even elite A rank adventurers are entering, lower ranked people such as yourselves don't have a chance. On top of that, even though the rules prohibit killing you can still be severely injured to the point where you may never walk again, or your hand may become nonexistent. People end up like that every year. Wouldn't just watching to learn be an adequate replacement?"

The older adventurer kindly warned us about the event.

But even knowing all that, I still want to enter.

"What's your level? Hekaton is the most likely to win unless another high ranked adventurer enters as well."

"Ah, level…"

'Level'…as I heard him ask me that I recalled the other reason for coming here.

I should measure myself quickly.

As the circle of light passed through my body, I noticed it seemed much faster than the one we used at Kwimill.

My level should show up any moment now…

Ah…eh?

"Ryua-chan, how did it go?"

"A-ah well you see, it's…999…"

"Ni-ni-nine hundered and ninety nine?"

"Yeah, this is high right? Since Hekaton was only 54…"

Suddenly a crowd gathered around us and silence fell upon the room.

"Hey, the max level this <Level Checker> can measure is 999 right?"

"Well yeah, we have no reason to go higher since only S ranked adventurers are over level 100…truth is 2 digits should've been enough."

"Maybe it's broken? We should call someone to fix it."

Broken again?

Only when I use it?

Though it only showed overflow at Kwimill, it was written properly this time…?

“Ryua-chan, I believe in you…”

It seems she could guess how I felt. Roel was grasping my hand tightly.

A staff member quickly showed up to inspect the machine.

I fought for ten years without a break in the <Caves of Hell>.

That achievement alone is my pride.

I don’t want it to be sullied.

“No matter where I look, there isn’t a single abnormality. We can take it for a closer inspection.”

The guild staff member quickly returned with my adventurer card.

999 was clearly written on it.

The old guy near us saw it and had a face that showed pure disbelief.

“That is definitely a mistake. The staff will be able to fix it though, so don’t worry.”

“Shut up.”

If you aren’t going to believe it then just keep it to yourself.

I was extremely bitter about the reaction this was getting so I quickly left the room and exited the guild building.

Roel chased me, flustered.

Tougi Taikai is more important than all this.

When I appear at the tournament they won’t believe my level is actually that high anyways.

Onwards to the castle…

“Ryua-chan, it’s this way.”

Roel was leading me. Even though I could see the castle from far away it was a fruitless effort.

I noticed shops were set up here and there on the road. Are they preparing for the festival?

There was a tall stone wall surrounding the castle, about ten times as tall as a house. I was thoroughly fascinated by it.

The entrance to the castle had a large bridge spanning a river with two guards standing on the opposite side.

“Why is there a river and bridge here?”

“It’s called a drawbridge. If you pull the rope for it, the bridge rises up. It’s a countermeasure for invasions and attacks.”

“Hee~ so it will rise if you pull on it?”

It seemed kind of sloppy but it’s easy to understand.

While I crossed the bridge I noticed something that looked like a rope.

The soldiers moved in front of us to stop us from entering, it seems they misunderstood our intentions.

Roel clarified that we were going to enter in the Tougi Taikai.

“So you’re participating? If you’re looking for the reception desk it’s just inside.”

There was a large crowd in the middle of the hall.

I wonder if that’s where the desk is?

“Since I’m not entering you should get in line, Ryua-chan.”

“Ah, right.”

There were 3 soldiers working the reception desk.

The variety of people here was astonishing. Some looked like adventurers and there were some that looked like the bandits from before.

Among these people was a woman who was wearing barely anything, her revealing upper armor looked really embarassing.

“Please fill in the necessary information here.”

I recalled my first day in the outside world, crying in the guild hall.

I’m different now though, I can write this time.

I’ve grown up! I can finally show the results of my training!

“Yes, let’s see here…Ri, Riyuwa? Is that how you read it? Adventyurer? You meant adventurer right? I was hoping this would be more readable but it is what it is…”

I heard someone stifling laughter with ‘pfft’.

I should have written everything properly though…oh wait, it should have been written Adven[tu]rer…

“It’s like the writing of a child…wait, aren’t you a kid!?”

The adventurer beside me was stealing glances and laughing at me.

How mortifying…even though I studied so hard…

“Ryua-chan, just ignore it.”

Roel gently patted my shoulder to comfort me. Her kindness helps me a lot.

Thank you, Roel. You are really too nice.

"So now that we're entered it looks like the preliminary round will start early tomorrow morning. We need to hurry."

"I wonder who'll appear in the preliminaries?"

"Well it seems like the final selection for the tournament is eight people, but it's all decided through the preliminary rounds."

"That's all? So I just need to win. I was worried for a moment."

It doesn't seem like there's some special task to complete.

I don't know if I'll be able to win the tournament but if it's just fighting I should be fine.

"Hou, it looke like we got 397 people this year. That's more than last time!"

"Ah, captain! Thank you very much for your hard work!"

The three soldiers stood at attention and greeted the man they called 'captain' as he returned the pose.

T-that is the captain…isn't he the person who showed up when I was attacked by that mysterious monster in Kwimill!?

So he's in charge around here huh…

"Let's see here…I wonder if Tifelia is participating this time? Well, considering how she is, she would think tournament is too annoying and barely made it time to enter."

"If Tifelia-dono participates in the tournament then the champion is already decided…"

"Oh…"

It seems that the captain noticed me but he immediately turned his gaze away.

I was curious if it really had been him that night so I gave in and asked.

"Hey, you were there that night right?"

"Hmm? What night? You've mistaken me for someone else."

"Liar, it was definitely…"

I recalled holding a bag of money that night.

'Forget about this' were his parting words.

So…that was in exchange to stay silent?

"Ryua-chan do you know him…?"

“No, I don’t. Let’s head back to the inn.”

It ended up being awkward. I looked like I was running from the castle. Are things fine like this?

That monster, why did they want to hide it so bad? Knowing what I do…I feel something ominous regarding that captain.

[Ryua | Lv: 999 | Class: Sword Fighter | Rank: C]

[Roel | Lv: 16 | Class: Healer | Rank:C]

* * *

“Is that girl going to participate?”

Kirkton had noticed two female adventurers leaving the castle.

“Eh? Well, they did finish their entry.”

“Is that so…”

Saying that, Kirkton rotated on his heel and walked away.

He had relief and fear on his face. It was a complicated expression.

“That was an unusual thing for Captain Kirkton to say.”

“Yeah, that was somewhat strange…”

Two of the soldiers were curious about their captain’s attitude towards those adventurers. It was really abnormal for him.

Anyone entering the castle would naturally be signing up so why would the captain ask something so obvious?

Neither of the men could figure it out.

“So that kid is participating…the one that defeated that monster…”

But there was one soldier who knew why the captain acted like he did.

However, his murmur was drowned by the din in the entry hall, remaining unheard by his comrades.

Chapter 33: Avangard Tougi Taikai (Part 1)

As we left the inn, we realized the town had changed. It was now flashy, showy, and busy.

Along the street, there were many shops all lined up.

A tent had been prepared for what seems like a fortune teller, and a shop emitting a sweet and delicious smell, there were so many shops with different yet attractive things..

“Spit-roasted <Pecking Bird>! 20g per piece! How about it?”

“Flavored shaved ice! How about some?!”

“Paparando region’s specialty, Squid Ink Tentacle Yakisoba! You can only eat it now!”

It seems all these shops are trying to advertise at once. I really don’t get it.

As I was walking, I heard my name called by a frantic voice. I have a bad feeling about this.

(TL: 歩いていると必死に声をかけられて、寄って上げないと悪い気がする。)

I turned around to greet Roel, who had her hands full with food; she couldn’t eat anything like that.

“Ryua-chan, carry this one!”

While she had me hold onto the yakisoba she scarfed the shaved ice and ten spit-roasted birds.

Just as I thought she was finished her snack she moved onto the next target.

It’s difficult to walk due to the amount of people but at least this kind of festival is refreshing.

I was never able to really leave Kwimill so all of these new sights are fascinating.

Suddenly a shop caught my attention.

If you knock merchandise over from a distance using a toy bow you get to keep it.

Is it really that simple? Yosh, I’ll do it!

“Something this simple…tei!”

The arrow missed by a large margin.

Once more!

“Roel, I want that sword <Ice Brand>! I’ll get it eventually!”

I thought that it would be an easy hit because of its size, but suddenly the bow broke

in my hands.

"T-t-this…I'm very sorry."

"No, it's fine. I'm prepared for things like this, it's no problem. Though, Ojou-chan, you really do have terrible aim. In the 5 years that I've run this shop I have never seen something like this."

"Ryua-chan is purely strength after all."

Roel declared that nonchalantly while chewing the gold apple candy she had in both hands.

I ended up challenging the game 5 times but I never hit the sword once.

I was so mortified I wanted to cry, but the owner seemed to sympathize with me and gave me a recovery item as a consolation prize.

"Using a bow is pretty difficult…Mai is amazing for being able to hit moving monsters."

"Ryua-chan, besides using a sword you're totally hopeless…"

Her words stabbed into me.

By the way, Roel had challenged the game twice and was able to hit an item with a magic ice effect as well as a royal jelly.

The jelly was already deep inside Roel's stomach.

It's possible that Roel has some talent with the bow.

Wouldn't she have more ways to fight if she seriously practiced with it?

"Hi~ you two lovely girls over there! Why not take a look at my shop for a while?"

Just like she declared yesterday, Cynthia had set up a shop.

She has recovery items, royal jelly, and some things I have no clue about all line up in a row.

"Cynthia-san, what kind of shop is this?"

"A shop for adults."

"Oh."

"Ku! I was expecting your face to turn red! You pure person!"

"What's a shop for adults anyways?"

There are times I don't understand Cynthia.

Whenever I try to ask about the 'adult shop' she avoids the topic. Since there isn't anything here that looks like food Roel wasn't too keen on looking around. The only exception was the jelly.

“Royal jelly, 200g each is a steal!”

“Expensive…Ryua-chan, let’s go that way.”

“W-what?”

Cynthia had been expecting Roel to buy some but she just turned away and pulled my hand.

It’s seems finances are more important than her appetite.

She’s been eating a lot here and ther though…will it be fine?

“Ah, that’s right! The Tougi Taikai!”

“Waaaaah! That’s right! C-can we still make it?!”

“20 minutes…”

“If we walk we won’t make it…okay!”

I carried Roel on my back.

“W-w-what!? Ryua-chan!”

Roel clung onto me as I jumped on the roof of a house.

Jumping from roof to roof I aimed for the castle.

“What’s that!? Part of the festival?”

“Ama~zing!”

“Hold me!”

The people below us seemed like they were cheering but I couldn’t care less.

‘Hold me’, I don’t know why someone would say that.

Roel tightly held onto me while staying quiet.

“Ryua-chan, this is embarrassing…”

“We’ll be there soon, just hold on.”

We reached the castle in about 5 minutes.

I landed in front of the two guards and they brandished their weapons in surprise.

“Y-you people are?”

“I’m a participant in the Tougi Taikai.”

“S-so that’s it. If you are participating go to the left entrance.”

The soldier gave me directions for being both a contestant and a spectator.

There seemed to be a fence dividing the two with long lines on both sides.

“Um, please don’t butt in line~! Please do- mugi!”

A short female soldier was swallowed up by the crowd as she tried to guide them.

With a small build like hers it would be pretty hard to fight back if you were pushed.

“Ah, are you a participant? The entrance is -gyu!”

She was taken by the crowd again as she tried to guide me.

You could only see her red hair popping out of the crowd here and there.

Some other soldiers dragged her out of the sea of people and chewed her out for a while.

The girl hung her head in shame.

“I wonder if she’s the same age as us? Regardless, what’s up with the soldiers here?”

“She was scolded pretty hard…it seemed serious.”

‘Do your best!’ I thought. I had separated from Roel and followed the route for participants. The waiting room had already filled up with the other contestants.

“This is just for the preliminaries, right?”

“Yo, just as I thought! You came!”

Metal-whatever was here. The weapon I broke yesterday had been repaired.

…Actually it just seems to be a new one.

“My stomach was acting up back then so don’t let it get to your head! Look, the B block contestants work out perfectly!”

“B block? What’s that?”

“A-aah?”

thump Metal-whatever was on the ground.

“Ah, my name is written here.”

“Y-yeah…”

“What’s with this weird net like thing drawn here?”

“Seriously? Listen up, since your name is written here and ‘Benkei’ is written there, your first opponent will be him. If you win against him then you will fight whoever won over here.”

“Hee~”

“Did you sign up without even knowing that…?”

“The village I lived in when I was younger never had anything like this. And since my parents are also dead…”

“I-Is that so…I’m sorry.”

Suddenly metal-whatever became kind. I wonder where the wild part of him went?

“Don’t worry too much about not knowing these things. Ryua, right? Unfortunately your opponent is me, Benkei.”

Behind us appeared a young looking person carrying a lot of weapons on his back and he was wearing a muffler on his shoulder.

He had really large and baggy armor on, it looks like it’d be really hot to wear.

“Geh! A ranked <Thousand Devices> Benkei!”

“Are both of you C rank? Bloody tournament officials, not declining amateurs. If you’re just here to test your strength, forfeit.”

“Just having a lot of weapons doesn’t make you strong you know.”

“W-what did you say? You, don’t you know my name!? Benkei the <Thousand Devices>!”

“Did you forget your crushing defeat last year?”

A hand was placed on Benkei’s shoulder. Hekaton appeared behind him.

“He-hekaton…”

“Shouldn’t you say Hekaton-san? You low tier A rank.”

“Uuu…”

Hekaton showed up and butted into our conversation like that. Mere moments passed before the room fell silent and all eyes were looking at us.

“So…are you Ryua?”

“I-I am”

Hekaton suddenly turned towards me.

He has a pretty big body, but Grundom’s is still larger.

“…so Seigel lost to a kid. The elite A rank doesn’t mean much it seems.”

“Wait, just now, what…?”

“We will now begin the preliminary round. All contestants in the first match for each block please come this way.”

A soldier announced that in a loud voice. First match…ah that's me.

"Now then, I look forward to seeing you in action."

Benkei looked at me and laughed like I was a fool.

I don't know what he meant by 'seeing me in action' but I know that he was making light of me.

I'll make you see…

* * *

It seems like the grounds were specially set up for this, it was a coliseum set up far from the castle.

The spectators were set up in a ring around us, almost like this was a sport to them.

Blocks A and B even had their own dedicated fighting areas.

"Block B, first match will start now. If your opponent surrenders that will signal the end of the match. Killing is instant disqualification."

"Ryua-chan! Good lu~ck!"

"Ryua-chan! Fight!!"

I could even hear Cynthia's voice. I wonder what she did with her store?

"Seigel-san please sign this!"

"Please shake my hands! Please!"

"Now now, I don't want to ignore anyone or hurt any feelings but I only have two hands. One for handshakes and one for signing things."

A group of female spectators were making a fuss around Seigel's seat.

I want him to leave, that gaggle of girls is distracting.

Why isn't he participating though?

"Are you sure you have the time to be looking away?"

Benkei's hands were already holding weapons, in one hand a sword and the other a spear.

As he got into his stance I wondered if he would use all the weapons on his back?

Though a person can only effectively use one weapon in each hand, so aren't the rest just dead weight?

"I have but one thing to teach you: The strength of an adventurer. This match serves as a perfect teaching tool. I'll even go easy on you because I want to avoid killing you."

“Now then, Battle start!”

“It’s sad that it had to end this way, but think of it as a type of experience.”

As soon as the signal went off he approached me with his spear, keeping me at a distance. He kept trying to thrust it at me, but his moves were so sloppy it’s barely grazing me.

As I lazily avoided his attacks, Benkei became agitated.

“Why do you keep running away? I was considering how you would approach me but too bad!”

As if showing off, he flicked the sword on his right hand.

It seems if I get close to him he’ll use that sword on me.

“Furthermore!”

As he threw his sword into the air, his now empty hand grasped a weapon on his back and threw it.

As it carved the air flying at me I noticed it was sharp and circular.

“Moonring blade! I have more! Take that!”

Suddenly 3 of those ‘moonring’ weapons were flying at me as well as Benkei with his spear.

For him to be so skilled it seems he’s put considerable effort into learning how to use all of those weapons.

Though ‘skilled’ is the only impression I have of this person.

The crowd began cheering with excitement as he moved like an acrobat and closed the distance.

Benkei caught the sword he had thrown in the air as the moonrings reached me.

‘There is no escape’ seemed to be expressed with his eyes.

Just before his weapons made contact I moved to his side at a speed he couldn’t keep up with.

His moonrings fell to the ground, cutting through empty air where I previously was and his spear thrust into nothing.

Benkei was a beat too slow to realize where I had moved to.

For his sake I waited until he noticed.

“So all of those weapons are for moves like that huh?”

“W-what!? Just when did you…?!”

He lost his balance as he turned towards me.

“Like you, I’m here to fight and win. Unfortunately I’m stronger.”

I moved behind Benkei again and lightly struck his neck.

Jolt, Benkei flinched and fell down without making a sound.

The spectators had been in an uproar till now, but all of B block went silent.

“Ryua-chan! Congratulations!”

“It was pretty easy…”

“See! Just as I anticipated! That girl is like an unripened fruit, steadily growing into something beautiful!”

That last part was unnecessary.

Roel and Cynthia were the only ones cheering amongst the tension.

“L-let’s see…B block, first match… the victor is Ryua!”

The crowd began cheering with that declaration.

“Geh! What’s with that! I bet a lot on Benkei you know!”

“A dark horse is HEEEEEEEEEERE!!”

I don’t know what that means but it seems everyone is surprised.

“That girl didn’t even draw her sword!”

“Was that a throw by Benkei? He stopped for a moment!”

“Haa!? Of course! That explains it! Return my money!”

“Well then…onto the second match!”

Am I supposed to go back to the waiting room?

I wanted to watch the other matches from here…if I stood in the corner would that have been fine?

“Yo, just as I thought. You’re a participant.”

“Ah, Gantetsu-san?!”

Gantestu appeared in the spectator seats.

‘Heigh ho’ he said as he sat next to Roel.

“So you travelled out here huh? If you had called me I would have arranged a cheap inn for you.”

“Eh, seriously?”

This should have been the first time Cynthia met him yet she was already getting familiar with Gantetsu.

Maybe they already knew each other?

"Oh? You're the girl from the Kwimill item shop…and why are you surprised? An A rank like myself can easily do something like that."

"But we didn't even know where you lived…"

"Oh, you're right! Gahahahaha!"

"Are you not going to participate, Gantetsu-san?"

"I'm not a young'un anymore, and there are some decent Champion candidates here."

I hadn't been watching but the fight in B block with Metal-whatever already concluded…he was on the ground, defeated.

"B block, second match finish! The victor is Baste!"

"Fufu for someone with muscle for brains, my weakening magic is super effective. I can easily shut you down. You see, fighting is all about brains."

The person speaking wore circular eyeglasses and magician robes. He was waving in an exaggerated fashion towards the audience, clearly showing off.

"The <Sealer> Baste. He doesn't rely on offensive magic but rather suppression type spells. His strength is around that of an average A ranker. He's also your next opponent, Ryua."

"Hmm, Metal Rod-san wasn't able to win and was completely crushed. Just as I expected…"

"Weakening magic huh? Ryua-chan is going to be fighting against that?"

"If his opponent was an average combatant he can completely seal their movements. He's a specialist."

The person from the ring seems to have more than one side to him. He was walking toward me with a really confident expression.

"You're Ryua-kun right? I saw the match earlier, but you won't beat me by relying on brute force. I suggest you pack up now and drop out."

After that brief speech Baste walked off somewhere.

So he's my next opponent.

Since Metal-whatever was kind enough to teach me things, I feel like I owe him one. I'll beat this guy up for him.

Oh, it seems the next match is starting…

* * *

“Ah, just a moment…”

“What Roel? Toilet?”

“I’ll be back shortly…”

Roel left her seat and quickly walked to somewhere.

“Well she did consume 10 drinks after all.”

“It seems that no matter how much she drinks or eats she doesn’t get fat. Though I’d prefer someone cuter that can restrain themselves…”

(TL:「しかし、あれだけ飲んで食べてよく太らないよな。オレとしてはもう少しかわいこちゃんにはその辺を自重してもらいたいものだが……」)

＊＊＊

“Let’s see, I’m sure it was around here…kya!”

Two people crashed into each other at the corner of a hallway.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry!”

“……..No, it’s fine.”

Roel felt guilty about the collision and lowered her head several times, much more than what was needed. After she returned to her hunt for her objective, the person she collided with silently saw Roel off. He wore a deep black robe which covered his whole body. The snake that was engraved onto his body could be seen.

“Ah how nice, that girl…”

He licked his lips and slowly chased after Roel.

Chapter 34: Avangard Tougi Taikai (Part 2)

"The match already started?!"

Roel had been flustered while she was lost, but managed to find her way back.

Since there was more than one entrance to the spectator seats, Roel had circled the vast venue many times looking for the proper path.

"It's very soon. You were in a real hurry, huh?"

"It is Ryua-chan's match…"

"Oh, it's starting."

Just as Seigel said, the first match of the second round for B block was starting.

* * *

"Baste-sa~n! Look at this wa~~~~y!"

"I bet on you~!"

Most of the spectators were cheering on my opponent, Baste.

Baste just wiped his circular glasses.

"Well then, start!"

I moved first and aimed for Baste's stomach.

Before he uses his unpleasant magic, I'll defeat him.

He groaned but didn't fall over.

"Gu…*cough*…y-you went easy on me…"

Even though I used the same amount of strength on him as I did on Benkei, Baste was barely able to stand.

He doesn't seem to be able to exert any more strength after that hit.

"<Might Down>…I cast that on you just before…I thought that someone like you, a musclehead, would swiftly attack first…It looks like I managed to make it in time…"

Baste was able to explain it while holding his stomach.

That's why he could still stand.

Nevertheless, if I put more force into it…I already put a decent amount in, but not enough to kill him.

"I-I'll show you! This is the winning pattern! <God Force>! <God Force>! <God Force>!"

It was apparent that his body was rapidly getting harder.

If I just let him keep casting that, I wonder how hard he could become?

"Now for the finishing touch! <Seal>! <Blind!> With that, your skills and eyesight are sealed!"

…Is he trying to taunt me while holding his stomach like that?

He was barely able to endure the hit…

Let's just end this.

"And now <Veno Fi….Ugeeea!"

I hit him with a slightly stronger punch and this time Baste lost composure, collapsing while holding his gut.

Twitch twitch he was convulsing on the ground. I think I overdid it…

"…Ha! T-the victor is Ryua!"

The soldier regained his senses, grasped my arm, and raised it to the sky.

"I-isn't that impossible!? That girl, twice now with one hit…"

"Is she an adventurer? It's impossible for a famous enthusiast like myself to not know her!."

I think they believe me now. Their reactions are different than before, excited cheers could be heard.

"I didn't expect her to be that strong…that isn't on the level of just defeating a <Poison Salamander>…"

"I think Ryua-chan's going easy so her opponent won't die."

"If she was serious then his guts would have scattered everywhere as his upper and lower halves got separated."

"That's on the level of a monster…"

She's saying stuff like that but does it matter? I won.

'Returning now will be troublesome so we should wait a bit,' was what I thought, but for some reason there were many participants on standby. Even I would get embarrassed by this many people observing me.

* * *

F block had already completed their representative match.

His opponent was an insulting woman. Argil harbored a lot of anger in his heart during the fight.

The woman had no damage on her armor and was standing tall.

“This is the first time that I, <God of Death> Argil have been insulted so…if you are that confident in yourself why don’t we make a bet? If I win, you retire as an S rank, <Master Knight> Tifelia?”

“Eh? But I don’t want to.”

Tifelia’s hair fluttered as she looked at the face of her stumped opponent.

She was thinking ‘I’d rather be preparing tonight’s dinner’.

(TL:死神アーギルをここまでナメたのはおまえが初めてだ……)

“Would it be better to eat out…? *sigh*”

“What did you say?”

“But if I do that too often my skin will…”

“You…!”

As the <God of Death> yelled at her, he charged with intent to kill.

He wasn’t too concerned about killing since he’s killed his own party members before.

It was unpleasant for the first while, eventually it became his badge of honor.

For him to be laughed at and insulted by the <Master Knight>, Argil was unable to keep his emotions in check.

(TL:そんな自分を侮蔑に等しい態度で嘲ったマスターナイトを生かす算段はアーギリにはなかった)

“Now, F block final match. Are both of you ready?”

“Quickly start it…!”

“Y-yes!”

Now that the referee soldier had performed his duties, he retreated.

The soldier could feel the fear in his body, as the match started he was already off of the platform as if running away.

“You are standing before me with nothing but your prided armor. Not even a weapon! <God of Death> Argil! At A rank 7, you are close to being an S rank. Don’t think I will stand still forever!”

(TL: ご自慢のあの鎧どころか、武器すら持たずにオレの前に立つとはな！死神アーギル！　Aランク7位とくりゃ、Sランクに近い存在だ！いつまでもあぐらかいていられると思うなッ！)

Argil chanted a wind magic so quickly you could barely hear the chant.

Suddenly a squall descended upon the arena and Argil released many rotating sickles from inside the tornado.

The tornado grew in size until the platform was swallowed up.

After a moment, the wind's course began to change and the path of the sickles changed.

A storm of sickles flying around…if you were inside the squall you would be mercilessly attacked from all sides. This move has killed many monsters and party members.

"Uwaa…I-I can't get near…"

The referee was unable to approach the platform to do his job. He looked rather angry as he looked at what was happening.

"Even in this tempest you won't flinch…"

The sickles were aiming at Tifelia. A normal human would be sliced in the blink of an eye, but Tifelia just took the hits. She came out unscathed, looking annoyed as she stood her ground.

"*Sigh*…"

As she sighed, she smashed one of the sickles flying at her.

She was completely unphased by the wind, and she hadn't moved a step from the spot she had started in.

"That's right, Ritta-chan would definitely cook me some food…rather I will make her cook me food."

Argil had been riding the wind and approached her flank.

The sickle blade's intent was to cut her neck.

Of course, the rules of this tournament would deem that a disqualification.

However, the <God of Death> hadn't cared about the tournament from the start.

Even the <Master Fighter> didn't have that kind of resolve.

But that lack of hesitation was the trigger.

The sickle made contact with Tifelia's neck.

However, even this sickle which could cut steel left no mark on her skin. Argil was flabbergasted.

"T-that's ridiculous! Just what did you do!?"

"Eh? So you were still here…"

With that one phrase the wind stopped.

Argil thought that Tifelia was using some kind of skill.

However, the moment his move was negated, his will to fight disappeared along with

his wind.

Argil surrendered.

“Match end!”

Being absent minded, Argil left Tifelia on the platform.

—-‘so you were still here’.

Due to his experience with combat, he could understand the meaning behind that line.

It’s not that he wouldn’t become her opponent, it’s that there was no opponent before her.

She hadn’t been fighting from the start.

“So this is S rank…”

The audience had been looking forward to the fight between Tifelia and Argil. No one could understand why it suddenly stopped.

“What? Is that the end? Seriously? There weren’t any panty shots from Tifelia-chan!”

“I saw Argil’s attack, didn’t he stop it himself? Oi! If you don’t feel like it why are you here~?”

Unless one had been in Argil’s shoes during that moment, no third party could understand the fear he felt.

* * *

The wind stopped coming from that direction.

I wonder who had been fighting there?

I wasn’t curious about the wind but rather the participants.

I was able to feel heavy pressure for a moment even from this distance.

That person seemed to pass the preliminaries.

“Victor, Griiman!”

“The fight is decided by the efficiency of your equipment! Remember that!”

Griiman declared while facing the audience.

He was definitely wearing expensive silver armor.

His helmet was so polished it was like a mirror, his sword had a dragon wing decoration on it, and hung around his neck were a multitude of jewel-like accessories.

Being so over the top…it looks really ugly.

I wonder if he cares about appearances?

“You’re right about that Griiman~! It’s all about fighting with lots of good equipment!”

“Ah-hah! You got it! This way is better than slowly polishing your superficial skills. Investing a lot of money into your gear is better than just being all talk!”

(TL:大金つぎ込めばいいだけの話だってな！)

That’s wrong…I don’t know what he’s spouting, but it’s wrong.

Armor doesn’t make that much of a difference. I don’t wear any myself.

I tried wearing some that I picked up at the <Caves of Hell>, but it was a pain to wear and stuffy so I threw it away.

“Griiman recently became A ranked, he’s pretty energetic.”

(TL:最近Aランクに上がった一番勢いのある奴だな)

“Keh…I feel like the young guys these days are taking shortcuts. He only managed to get to that rank because of all that equipment.”

“I’m not denying or approving that. But proof of his strength is easy to measure since he can display it at any time.”

“*Gulp* fu~n…*Gulp*”

“Roel-chin, you’ve had way too much to drink…won’t you end up going to the toilet again?”

They were pretty lively in their seats.

“We’ll have a 15 minute break now, but afterwards the final preliminary match will begin!”

A break huh? Seeing Roel drink so much, I’m feeling rather thirsty.

Should I buy a drink if the salesperson is still wandering through the spectator seats?

I jumped towards the spectator seats, and as I landed the surrounding people looked at me with surprised expressions. I bought a Momoru Soda with my limited pocket change.

“Ryua, that was rather rude. I know it’s bothersome but follow the path like everyone else to get up here.”

“Oka~y.”

I didn’t expect Seigel to berate me about that.

But with all those girls following him, I guess he has to keep up appearances.

“Ryua, give that greenhorn a punch right from the get-go!”

“If she did that wouldn’t he die…? *Gulp*”

I wonder why Gantestu was so angry?

Moreover, Roel, you’re drinking way too much.

“So you’re Ryua-san……”

My arm was being rubbed by Tifelia. I didn’t even notice she got this close to me.

“Yo, Tifelia. You’re participating this time, huh? How did you stop that wind?”

“Fu~un, *rub* *rub*…”

“Ignoring me huh? I get it.”

She was completely ignoring Seigel and kept rubbing my arm and body. It was more like tickling at this point, so I brushed her hand away.

“Ah, I’m sorry…”

“I-it’s fine…”

“D-don’t do anything strange to Ryua-chan!”

“You…are an adventurer?”

“Yeah.”

“Really…”

As she said that, she jumped down in a similar fashion to how I got up here.

Seigel needs to warn her as well.

“As usual, that woman is really hard to keep still. Though that’s good in its own way.”

Nothing!?

Whatever, the situation got weird because of her. I drank my soda and jumped down like Tifelia had.

“Ah!”

My match will start soon; Griiman is my opponent, it seems.

The same guy that was currently showing off his gear while smack-talking his opponent.

(TL: そのグリイマンはというと他の冒険者相手に自分の装備を見せびらかせている。)

“A good adventurer uses good equipment while a shabby man will wear shabby things!”

“Even though I don’t recklessly choose my gear…how…”

(TL:「市場でも滅多に見ないのにどうやって……」)

As the onlookers became envious, Griiman seemed really satisfied.

I wonder how expensive my Mithril sword is?

“Oh, my match will start soon! So the opponent of the great me is…that girl!”

“Yeah, it’ll be me. Nice to meet you.”

“I’ve seen your matches up till now, you show promise. However, I’ll say it now: You won’t win against me.”

Griiman pointed as if he was taunting me.

Sure, bring it on.

Chapter 35: Avangard Tougi Taikai (Part 3)

The preliminary final for our block had placed me against Griiman.

I had to win against Benkei, Baste, and many others, but this guy has a weird atmosphere.

Griiman kept looking at my sword; he was clearly fascinated by it. I can't compare him to how he seemed before.

"B Block preliminary final match, begin!"

"Wait!"

By blocking the signal, it became a false start.

Really? What do you want?

Just when I thought I would have to wait for a while to get started, Griiman raised his palm to me as if denying my worries.

"I am a merciful man, nothing more. If you were defeated without knowing what my equipment did, you wouldn't accept that as a loss would you?"

"Why are you already deciding that I've lost on your own?"

"Don't get conceited because you defeated Benkei and Baste. Those guys lost because they didn't have proper gear. Really, it's amazing that they talk about being an A-rank in the first place."

Griiman approached me with his extravagant sword unsheathed.

"First off is this–Ice Dragon Sword. A monster that lives far to the north at <Breeze Mountain>, the <Freezing Winter Dragon>, had its fang turned into this weapon. The sharpness of this blade is top class and it also has an ice magic effect to boot."

As he put down his sword, I thought he was finished explaining, but then he poked his armor with his thumb. Is he going to explain all of his equipment to me? Honestly, I'm interested.

"This armor is hand-made by a skilled armor craftsman, Shiromi Armor. It cuts the damage you take from magic, regardless of its type. Lastly is this necklace; it increases your health and contains a passive ability to protect you if you get into a dangerous situation."

I, who was fine with my Mithril Sword, realized the gap between us just from that explanation. His armor seems like it would be too hot to wear, but his sword is cool.

It looks heavier than my sword, but its strength is probably much greater than mine.

"Now then, should we get this match started?"

"Sure. Is it fine for me to attack now?"

"I won't let you get the first move in!"

Griiman swung his <Ice Dragon Sword> in a large arc, and many ice pillars began to stretch out and attack me. I wonder how hard his armor is?

Ignoring the ice spears, I just kicked them away and tried hitting his chest with a little more power than the time I hit Baste.

A loud metallic sound rung out and at the same time a hole appeared in his armor.

My punch didn't stop at his armor; it actually had gone through to hit his abdomen.

"Guh! *Hack**Cough*"

Blood was dripping from Griiman's mouth as he flew off of the platform.

You could hear both him and his armor hitting the ground.

The referee rushed over to confirm things, and Griiman was eventually carried out on a stretcher.

"Winner, Ryua! The representative of B Block has been decided!"

"Just what was that? Is she a monster!?"

"No way, it must be a trick. If you paid Griiman a lot of money, he would throw the fight."

It's not a trick.

"Hmm, it looks like all the representatives have been chosen. The tournament lineup will be announced shortly so we'll have to wait until then."

The other soldiers were speaking amongst themselves, but the referee soldier that had been in charge of my match suddenly walked off somewhere.

I could see the other representatives on a far away platform, but there was nobody from Tifelia-san's block.

"Oi, go up that way~!"

Seigel called out to me while waving his hand.

The flocking girls made it hard to see him; it would be better if they went away.

I thought about jumping to get to him quickly, but instead I leisurely walked.

* * *

"Ryua-chin, you really did it! A nameless female adventurer advancing towards the tournament finals is quite a big deal you know!"

It seems to have caused quite the commotion, and I've noticed many people, spectators and adventurers alike, looking at me recently.

“There are other C-ranked participants, but almost all of them have been defeated. I wonder how long it’s been since a C-rank has been a block representative?”

“Me, me, it’s me ~ssho~”

With his strange hip-bending stance, Xinbu called out to us.

It’s the guy that tried to kill Grundom…I can’t believe he’s an adventurer.

“Yo Xinbu, looks like you’re not participating this year. What are you going to do?”

“Relax guys, I’m different from you. I’ve been rather busy ~ssho~, at any rate…oops~”

I wonder what he was going to say?

Well, it’s fine. I’d rather not talk to him anyways.

“If you’re busy, then why waste time bothering us?”

“An adventurer past his prime shouldn’t be so snippy with me. I’m interested in that one.”

He shot that snarky remark at Gantetsu and pointed towards me with his palm facing the sky.

“You should quickly raise your rank to A ~ssho~. Although, this tournament will most likely only bump you up to B.”

“Oh? But if I do that, then Roel…”

“Huh?”

Did she only notice Xinbu now…? I see many scattered cups around her, just how much has she drunk?

“I-I’m shocked ~ssho~…”

He’s surprised by this…?

Well I guess I’m used to Roel’s behaviour, but seeing it for the first time would be shocking.

“That’s right, that’s right. Since you’re in a party with this bottomless drinker, she should also be able to achieve B-rank, regardless of how useless she is.”

“Ha?”

Did this guy come here specifically to make fools of us?

I clenched my fist in anger towards Xinbu, but Roel just gently raised her hand.

“It’s fine, Ryua-chan. Don’t mind me…”

“Well at least have fun in the festival ~ssho~, just leave everything to us.”

What did he mean by that? Before I could ask he had already run away.

I really hate him.

"Your hate isn't misplaced. The thing is, he's the 4th place A-rank and hasn't budged in a long time. His strength and achievements don't lie. Enough to make you jealous right?"

"It actually makes you want to try and fight against him someday, no?"

Seigel drank the 'juice' he received from a girl while talking.

I don't know if he's serious or not considering he's drinking.

"Thank you very much for your patience! We just finished deciding the line-up for the tournament! Please look over here!"

Round 1

1st Match

<Meteor> Nikka [A-Rank]

vs

<Crusher> Hekaton [A-Rank]

2nd Match

Ryua [C-Rank]

vs

<Heroine of the 100 Empires> Amane [A-Rank]

3rd Match

<Sky Crown> Rupee [A-Rank]

vs

Kweed [B-Rank]

4th Match

<Master Knight> Tifelia [S-Rank]

vs

Inoro [No Rank]

There was a large iron board with words displayed on it. My name as well as the names of the other participants were on it.

My opponent is…is it a woman?

I wonder what kind of person she is?

“Hou, it seems there’s a B-ranked guy that advanced as well. Looks like a rising star besides Ryua is here, lucky guy~”

He really was lucky. Besides us, there were only A-ranked fighters. Hekaton was the guy with the huge hammer, right? He had a rather awful atmosphere about him and looked at people with really cold eyes…

“Even so, isn’t the board dominated by A-ranked combatants? Ryua-chin being a C-rank really sticks out here.”

“They are A-ranked for a reason. They have had a massive amount of combat experience when compared to others. Even I, who’s ranked 16th, went through a lot of hardships…”

“Tell us! I feel like I’ve heard you talk about this about 6 times now, but I want to hear it again~!”

The gaggle of girls surrounding Seigel attentively hung on his every word. I’m interested in hearing about it, but I’m not about to fight through his fans to listen.

“With this, the first day of the Tougi Taikai ends! The finals will start tomorrow, so rest well everyone!”

With that announcement from the soldiers, the amount of people inside the coliseum gradually dwindled. I hadn’t noticed that it was already evening.

“Well then, Ryua, starting tomorrow the actual matches will start. Because it’s the finals, the amount of spectators will be much greater than what turned up today. The King of Avangard will also be here.”

“The King will be?”

“That’s right. This is your big chance. If you manage to catch his Majesty’s attention, then there’s a chance you’ll gain his favor.”

“To be favored by the King due to fighting…”

The King of Avangard…I know that the King holds the most powerful position in a Kingdom. But to be liked by him merely due to fighting is somehow… wrong.

“It seems that there are only a few people still here. Aa~…the air is good tonight! It would go great with some ale!”

“I’ll join you, Gantetsu-san!”

“Me too!”

I wonder if Roel will also join them… Although, it seems she has a different goal in mind.

“Well then, girl, good luck tomorrow!”

Will Cynthia also show up tomorrow? What happened to selling lots of things?

* * *

As we travelled back, I was quite restless, but I still walked slowly.

Nighttime seems to be quite lively around here.

A half-naked drunkard was on the sidewalk, sleeping people were scattered here and there, and some people were even dancing.

Roel was enticed by the smells coming from a food cart.

"Ryua-chan, aren't you hungry from all that fighting? Don't worry about the cost, just eat whatever you want."

"Now that you mention it, I'm starting to get hungry…"

We went to the food cart that was making steaks out of <Dark Buffalo> from the Kwau region. It's quite delicious, even more than the <Pecking Bird>…but as I expected, Roel ordered 10 servings as soon as we approached.

(ED: Actually Yakiniku, but it's just grilled meat)

"Grilling it until it's perfectly cooked, and pouring the excess sauce on it…so good~"

"No other way to eat it! Grilling it until it's perfectly cooked, and pouring the excess sauce on it~ so good~"

Why did Roel say the same thing twice? I guess she was just deeply moved by how good the steaks tasted? I don't get her sometimes.

"Ryua-chan, Congratulations! This is our celebration for you advancing in the tournament!"

"I-is that so? …thanks."

Chewing on the bone in the meat while saying that doesn't quite work you know…

"Since we came all this way, you need to make it to the championship! …ah, I'm not trying to put pressure on you or anything!"

"If possible…I want to win."

"If it's Ryua-chan, I'm sure you can! Even today you won with only using a punch."

"Yeah, but I'm worried about Tifelia-san. If she becomes my opponent I don't know what will happen…"

"That rubby-rubby person? So she's Tifelia…I got a little angry."

"Eh?"

"N-nothing!"

Roel's face turned red and she turned away. Is she hot or something?

“Even from far away, I felt an electric shock from her. She seemed like quite a gentle person though…”

I was able to feel it even from a distant block.

——S-rank

It may just be like Seigel said, they’re all monsters. I’m sure that she’s an opponent I shouldn’t go easy on. I thought about tomorrow while eating spareribs with Roel.

“You’ll be killed you know!? I’m saying this now because it gives you a chance, please withdraw.”

The surrounding eyes all gazed at the loud voice. A girl and a young man could be seen seated together. I recognized that hair, it was the female soldier that guided us before the preliminaries! Seeing her hop here and there left an impression on me, it seems.

“Even so, Ritta, I’m still an A-rank. I’ll be fine, just believe in me!”

“Your opponent is the <Crusher>, you know that right? Last year he was disqualified for killing his opponent!”

“My nickname is <Meteor> for a reason. I’m a good matchup against his fighting style. I can’t say I won’t make a mistake, but I’m really confident in my chances for this fight.”

“Why are you being so stubborn…?”

Crusher’s opponent was…<Meteor> Nikka.

“I really want you to watch my match.”

“Aaaugh I don’t care anymore!”

Ritta ran out from the food cart while Nikka just watched her and sighed.

“Ah, you don’t need to worry about that. It’s not an intimate relationship; we’re siblings.”

‘Hahahaha’ he laughed while scratching his head.

Even as he paid for the food, the atmosphere he left stayed awkward.

“Ritta-chan is worried about her brother’s match…but I wonder what Nikka meant when he expressed his desire for her to watch him?”

I understand why she would be worried about her brother, but I feel like he wants to fight.

I’m the same as him, after coming this far I won’t just stop, especially since there were only a few matches left.

I won’t withdraw.

* * *

“That sure was delicious…”

“Roel, this is bad…our money is…”

“Spending this much should be expected when going to a festival.”

I wonder why she’s so lenient about spending our money now?

Seeing her so satisfied though…I’ll let it slide.

The town was still noisy. As expected at this late hour, you couldn’t see any children running around. Oh, there’s a girl stopping a fight between drunks.

A girl?

Ah, it’s Ritta.

“I will be stopping this fight so-bufue!”

She wasn’t even able to finish her sentence before they started fighting;, she was just brushed off to the side.

Not being discouraged by this, she came between them again.

“You won’t be able to stop it with just that…”

“Yeah, I can’t watch this any more…”

I quickly moved towards Ritta to help her out. I wonder if she hasn’t noticed me yet? She was looking between the men restlessly and finally saw me approaching her.

“Eh, ah, umm…sorry…”

“I’ll stop them, so don’t worry.”

I approach the men as I say that. The stink of alcohol is making me really dizzy; how do people drink this stuff? Why would they drink enough to be this belligerent? I’m at a loss.

“Didn’t you just bump into me? Aren’t you gonna apologize!? HUH!? Don’t you young’uns know any manners?”

“Old man, you should just retire. You’re a hindrance.”

They just bumped into each other…really? Something so trivial? Ah well, it can’t be helped. I can’t let this go on any longer.

“Hey, grumpy old men, you’re being a hindrance you know.”

“So? Just go away…oh.”

They realized it wasn’t Ritta trying to stop them anymore and seemed a little surprised. Even so, they just brushed me aside like they had done to Ritta. Right then, I began.

I grasped one of each man’s hands.

"Owowowowow! Ouch! Please stop it's going to breeeeak!"

"Are you for real? It can't hurt that-!!! Agh!"

"Both of you are disturbing the other people here, so just stop fighting and leave."

"Yes yes," they both answered, and I released them.

They both disappeared inside the crowd, not understanding what just happened.

Apparently, they can still be calm while drunk.

"Um, sorry…thank you."

"You should be more careful, that was a dangerous thing to do."

"But I should at least be able to stop something at that level, being a soldier from the castle and all…I get laughed at regularly for not being able to do my job…"

It seems she's desperate because of that. Did I mess up? She even had tears falling from her eyes…

"Oi, Ritta!"

I heard that carefree voice from earlier; it was Nikka. Was he worried about Ritta? It seemed like he had been looking for her, and he was breathing rather heavily as if he had been running.

"Are you all right? Did those guys do anything strange to you? …nnn?"

'Those guys do anything strange' caught my attention.

Nikka glanced at Roel and I, and as he saw me his expression suddenly lit up.

"Ah! You're Ryua-kun right? You're the C-rank <Surprising Girl>!"

"Su-surprising!?"

"You didn't know? You've been the topic of some very heated conversations recently! Crushing the A-ranked fighters without any difficulty made people talk about scouting you for a party and even for a guild!"

"Now that you mention it, I've been noticing people stealing glances at me recently."

"They're probably waiting for the finals with bated breath. It seems you and I will be fighting in the 2nd round, please be gentle with me…hahahaha!"

"That's another reason why I kept saying that Onii-chan won't be able to win!"

It looks like their argument from the food cart is continuing, Ritta exploded on Nikka again. Why is Nikka being so stubborn and ignoring his sister's wishes about competing in the Tougi Taikai?

I thought we were competing for the same reasons, but clearly his motivation in this tournament was different from mine.

Chapter 36: Avangard Tougi Taikai (Part 4)

The 2nd day of the Tougi Taikai, the finals of the tournament.

The crowd is incomparable to the amount of people that showed up for the preliminaries.

From the castle to its gate, all the way up to the coliseum, no matter where you go it's so packed with people you can't move freely.

I was eventually able to make it to the participant waiting room after being pushed and mobbed by the crowd.

I wonder if Roel made it to the spectator seats safely?

The only people left in this room were the participants for the finals.

Nikka and Hekaton were both here, but for some reason Tifelia was absent?

Perhaps she just slept in…

As I entered the room, I was approached by a woman wearing very revealing armor.

"You're Ryua, right?"

"Y-yeah, why?"

"To be a finalist in the tournament at such a young age, not bad. I am Amane, an A-rank adventurer and the Guild Master of <Johyo-dan>."

It seems there's an adventurer-run guild that's comprised of individual adventurers and entire parties of adventurers. They're unique in that aspect. It works more or less like the guild Roel and I go to, except the war spoils for this guild are managed by the entire group and are used as funds for journeys and such. Seigel explained it to me while he was killing time in the <Kizel Canyon>. It was a long and boring talk but I listened to some of it.

"I really like strong women. If you're okay with it, why not join <Johyo-dan>? No matter the time, you'll be welcomed with open arms."

"T-thanks for the offer but…"

"It's fine. There's no rush."

Knowing that the A-ranks aren't filled with people like Hekaton and are all disagreeable gives me some peace of mind. There are some nice ones as well.

"Keh, it's a Guild that just throws away men…"

"Haa!? Did you say something?"

A man with long bangs covering one eye was standing in the room. He had a mysterious air about him and was stroking his sword's scabbard. He has an air of self-importance.

"I know about it. You only let women who've been traumatized during a journey or from some other source in the past join your Guild. It's a gathering of losers."

"Do you want to start something before the tournament?"

Amane had a gentle face up until that moment, but now she looks like a different person, filled with hatred. Her blood vessels popped out and her body swelled, it makes you wonder if Amane is actually a woman? Though what did that guy mean by trauma? Is he talking about being betrayed by your party?

"You're Kweed, right? Looking down on me just because I'm a woman…I'm still an A-rank you know? You'll experience a lot of pain if you keep this up."

"Now that I think about it, I did something similar in the past. A woman with no knowledge about the world approached me to form a party, and in the end I unintentionally did her. I wonder how things turned out for her afterwards….gehehehehehehahahahaha!"

Amane looked like she was ready to pounce on Kweed due to that provocation, but Nikka came between the two of them to interrupt.

"If you cause trouble in the waiting room you'll be disqualified, you know that right? Settle your argument in the ring, ok?"

Nikka winked as Amane and Kweed calmed down.

Amane was still very agitated and was glaring at Kweed.

As if making a fool of her, Kweed laughed and returned to his seat, stroking his scabbard. Amane slowly sat down with a scary expression on her face.

Kweed said they were losers, but if you get up after being defeated, you're not a loser.

Even I have lost many times. If you make fun of someone just because they've lost once, I'll be the one to beat you down.

"Uffufufufu, just a bit more…just wait a little longer and you can suck some blood ok?"

Kweed kept stroking his scabbard while murmuring. It's really creepy so I stopped looking at him.

"Yaa, yaa, I'm sorry for being so late! I even set my alarm for an hour early…"

A person wearing what looked like a crown and a gorgeous robe entered the room. Just before entering, that person had rolled up their hair into an odd hairstyle. I really wanted to put something like a pencil in it.

"So, it's <Sky Crown>…I heard you were a specialist in Star magic, perhaps having a one-on-one duel with you would be a good idea."

Hekaton suddenly declared that in a sarcastic tone.

I was trying to think about how <Sky Crown> was going to respond, but all that came out was laughter as Hekaton's sarcasm was ignored.

"You may be right about that! However, a person truly shines after putting in great effort! Just like the stars!"

I only saw the ceiling above us, not any stars. <Sky Crown> was pointing a finger to the sky, seemingly satisfied.

"Scum."

Hekaton swung his body as he stood up and faced the match grounds. At that moment, some soldiers came.

"The Opening Ceremony will be starting now! Each of you, please follow me!"

Opening Ceremony? I wonder what that is? Are we not fighting?

Tifelia has yet to appear, but we still headed off towards the grounds to start the ceremony.

* * *

The match fields from the preliminary round weren't here anymore, instead there was a large platform in the middle of the coliseum. It was circular and surrounded by spectators. I wonder where Roel is?

During the preliminaries I was able to see her seat near F block, but this time there are way too many people to pick her out of a crowd.

It was really hot with the sun beating down on us and the numerous people in the coliseum.

"With this, we will now start the Opening Ceremony! First, the participants!"

We had been on standby at the entrance, and we filed into the coliseum one by one.

The fanfare was totally different from the preliminaries, the spectators raised quite the din.

"Well then, I will be the official for this tournament! You may call me Kathia! Now onto the participants! The representative from A block; crushing his opponents dreams and hopes with his mighty hammer: <Crusher> Hekaton!"

Hekaton raised one hand, as if responding to the shouts from the spectators.

"Why is a murderer participating again! This tournament is ridiculous!"

"DIE!"

There were some curses mixed into the cheers and shouts from the audience. I recall Ritta talking about how Hekaton killed someone in last year's tournament and got disqualified…was it on purpose?

"E~h? Well, moving onto B block! Surprisingly a C-rank, a junior crushing her seniors! Even veteran A-rank adventurers are downed with just her fist! The One-Punch Girl, <Surprising Girl> Ryua!"

I feel really uneasy for some reason…

Some people were in high spirits from that introduction. But, One-Punch Girl? I didn't use my sword, but still…

"AHAHAHAHAHA! O-One-Punch Girl she says!"

"D-don't laugh! I-isn't it cool!?"

I heard Cynthia laughing and Roel following up on her from somewhere.

I hung my head in shame during my introduction, I can't show my embarassed face to all these people.

"From C block, defeating veterans as fast at the stars twinkle! A-rank <Meteor> Nikka!"

"I've been expecting this~!"

There was a fair amount of cheering, but Nikka seemed depressed while being introduced. I didn't think he was so weak-minded.

"Next is a heroine that needs no introduction! Reigning at the top of 100 empires! From D block, inflicting fear deep inside of all men she encounters! A-rank <Heroine of 100 Empires> AMANEEEEEEE!"

"Amane-san~! Don't lose to a man!"

"You amateurs don't understand Amane-chan's cuteness!"

"Being scorned by Amane-chan, glared at by her sharp eyes, and best of all when she spits at us and yelling *scum!* while we breathe heavily!"

She's pretty popular with women and men, but did I hear some weird comments mixed into those cheers?

Regardless, Amane waved her hand to everyone in the audience. She has a big heart, it seems.

"We have one more dark horse from E block! The nihilistic B-rank, Kweed!"

"I'm expecting something from you! I just became your fan!"

"That's somewhat disgusting~"

You can hear some jeering yet reasonable responses. I wonder if he's still as confident as he was earlier?

"From far away in F block, a star has come around, floating with a royal appearance and a glittering crown! One of the few Star magic users, <Sky Crown> Rupeeee!"

"There sure a lot of glittering stars today! There and over here as well!"

"KYA~! Please face here, our prince~!"

"Tsk, die!"

Rupee seems to be quite popular with the ladies. Prince you say?

He raised his hands while spinning slowly, responding to his supporters.

When I thought he was done, a glittering light came out from his hand and flew towards the spectator seats.

"For the happiness I feel today, this is a present. Tomorrow's happiness will be grasping your hands as if I was holding the stars themselves."

"Ah~ I can't take this anymore~"

It looks like people started to faint from being too happy?

This is bad. I can't figure out what he said…I need to study more, it seems.

"And now, from G block is!…eh, what?"

Right, Tifelia still isn't here. The soldiers that were looking forward to seeing her seemed perplexed.

"I apologize, I slept in late…*sigh*"

Tifelia trotted into the coliseum in a daze, bread hanging from her mouth.

It seems…this is how Tifelia does things.

"E-eh! From G block, Avangard Kingdom's prided and strongest knight! You all know her title, <Master Knight>! The sole reason our finances are unbalanced, Tifelia-chan!"

"She's here!!! Please give me that bread~!"

"Even though I'm a woman, I'd be okay with Tifelia holding me!"

The cheers seem quite…different than what came out earlier. The air and ground vibrated from the sheer noise the crowd emitted. For the entire venue to cheer for one girl like this…

"Keh, the trash is too noisy."

Hekaton seems to hate seeing this, he's spitting out some curses.

It seems he's on edge waiting for the fight to start. That's the vibe I get from him, anyways.

"Lastly, from H block! ….eh? Mysterious Man, Inoro!"

The venue suddenly fell silent. I hadn't even noticed him in the waiting room. Inoro's entire face was covered by a black cloth that coiled around his face, his body was covered by a black robe, everything he had on was black. It was really bizarre.

Nobody cheered for him.

"Was there someone like that in the preliminaries?"

"Yeah, but he's pretty ordinary. He only used normal magic and showed no special traits…"

"Now that the introductions are finished, our Majesty has some words for us! Please be silent!"

Will the King finally show himself? There were two soldiers standing in a spot higher than the spectator seats, as well as an old man with a strict face I had never seen before.

An extravagant chair was in the middle of that section, but nobody was seated on it.

After a brief moment, an old man in one of the seats up there moved forward.

He had light brown hair tidily lying on his back.

A crown sat upon his head, just like with Rupee. He also had a thick robe on.

The old man slowly sat down in the fancy chair.

The venue was dead silent. Was there anything interesting to even talk about at a time like this?

"It's been about 400 years since Avangard was founded. Every year we've held an exhibition like today's tournament. It goes without saying that the goal of this tournament is to cultivate the future for any possible warriors, and to be chosen to bear this country's hope. Unlike other countries, Avangard does not have many specialties. We mostly rely on imports for products. What we excel at is <Strength>. Right now, in this era of adventurers, there can be no mistake in the results of cultivating strong warriors. We encourage everyone here to constantly improve and cultivate their abilities. To the eight of you before me, I am proud of you. Adventurers like yourselves are the true pride of Avangard, and I expect great things from you. Your struggle to get here was surely difficult…"

I feel sleepy…I did wake up pretty early after all. How long will he drone on for? I want to start already.

———The King's speech ended up putting me to sleep.

* * *

"I wonder what kind of place 'outside' is?"

I've always thought about what exists outside the village. I talked to Kurinka about it pretty frequently. She would just obediently listen to me. I really love her…

"If Ryua-chan is going to become an adventurer, I wonder what I will become?"

"What are you talking about?"

"Well, some adventurer classes use swords and others magic."

"Hee~ I wonder which I'll choose."

"Ryua-chan looks like she would be bad with magic."

Kurinka was giggling while she said that.

Would it be better to use a sword to fight?

——burning houses.

Father and mother crouching, holding their heads.

It looked like it really hurt.

Both of them were shouting as I ran.

They thrust me away when I reached them.

“Run away! Run away!”, they kept repeating that to me.

Why?

I escaped outside only to see monsters destroying the village.

Kurinka. Where is Kurinka?

Even though we promised to play outside.

I can’t find her anywhere…

I saw something in the distance.

That guy was standing amongst the burning flames.

That black demon.

That one-winged black demon.

He slowly walked towards me.

That guy, that’s right…that guy—

“Get away from it!”

Someone shouted.

I ran away.

I turned back to see the Demon pierce that person.

I ran into the deep forest without stopping.

Suddenly a monster attacked.

Just before its claws tore me up—

* * *

“…was there. That is the history of our country.”

“guu…suu…”

I was shaken by someone and woke up.

It seems I ended up falling asleep. Amane was sitting next to me and awkwardly pointed towards the King. He was looking at me.

“I-I’m really sorry.”

I bowed my head earnestly, though that didn’t need to be said.

The King let out a little sigh and continued talking.

“…that’s all! Ladies and gentlemen, I pray you good luck! Now, I declare that the 402th Avangard Tougi Taikai has officially begun!”

The audience got fired up as the King finished. It looks like things are finally starting.

I noticed the King was still looking at me, saying nothing. I just let out and awkward laugh to avoid trouble.

“Fu~…”

The King sighed again.

This type of person…I’m bad at dealing with them.

“Today, let’s show the King my fights,” I decided.

Chapter 37: Avangard Tougi Taikai (Part 5)

“Well then, it has finally begun. The Avangard Tougi Taikai Finals! This is Kathia, reporting live, and I’ll be in charge of critique while explanations will be done by Shitakka-san!”

“I’m Shitakka, please take care of me.”

“I think the champion this time around will be Tifelia-chan, but who else has a chance?”

“Umu, Hekaton and Rupee are the most likely besides Tifelia. Beyond that, I couldn’t say. That C-rank girl isn’t used to fighting either. Look at her sword, the handle is practically spotless. That is enough proof to show it isn’t used at all.”

“I see! Oh, it looks like the first match is about to start!”

The voices of the reporters resounded within the coliseum. According to Amane-san, it seems they use a machine to make their voices loud. They said something rather rude about me though.

I wonder if Shitakka is famous?

“Don’t take the words of that person seriously.”

Amane comforted me since I was sulking.

Even though she has a tough appearance, she’s quite kind.

It is fine to confide in her so much though? She is my first opponent, after all…

Hekaton and Nikka had already ascended to the match platform.

“Round 1, 1st Match! Hekaton vs. Nikka! It’s finally getting underway. Shitakka-san, in this situation, Hekaton is superior right?”

“That’s actually not the case. Nikka is a new A-rank with potential. You’ll understand why he’s called <Meteor> when the match begins.”

Hekaton was looking at Nikka with no interest in his eyes.

Nikka was doing some stretches and relaxing.

I wonder where Ritta is watching from?

It seems she wasn’t able to stop him in the end, but I wonder how she feels watching this?

“You just recently became A-rank, right? It would’ve been fine if you hadn’t shown up here you know?”

“No, this isn’t the time to be childish.”

“So carefree…”

“Well then, let the match commence!”

With that, it began.

Will Hekaton brandish his hammer to fight? If he misses, he’ll leave a large opening.

Since Nikka is using a spear, I can’t really tell who will win.

“Nuun!”

Hekaton brought down his hammer upon Nikka.

After the thundering sound of impact, the match platform had been utterly destroyed at ground zero.

“Nikka evaded with ease~! Just as I thought, Nikka is much faster!”

Hekaton once again prepared his hammer. I don’t think either is serious yet.

They were just observing each other for a while, but then Nikka did a running long jump. He came crashing down onto Hekaton.

“Meteor <Piercing Star>!”

(TL: if anyone had better name for this please tell us 突星)

“Nikka’s certain kill skill, <Piercing Star>! Its power can even pierce steel! However, it’s no good!”

Hekaton’s hammer intercepted the tip of the spear. He pursued Nikka into the air while defending.

“Torya!”

I thought he was going to hit Nikka, but suddenly Hekaton’s hammer was hit.

As if swimming in the air, Nikka corrected his posture and attacked again with his spear.

Hekaton wasn’t able to defend in time.

“Meteor <Heaven Star Strike>!”

(TL: once again 天星撃)

With a speed surpassing his previous <Piercing Star> skill, Nikka’s spear flew into Hekaton. It crashed into the platform and caused rubble to fly everywhere due to its power. If Hekaton had taken the hit straight on, then he wouldn’t have walked away unscathed.

It was like a meteor.

I see, so this is how Nikka fights.

Hekaton wasn’t able to dodge the <Heaven Star Strike> entirely; half of his body was covered in blood as he managed to stand back up.

“A-amazing! He dances like a butterfly and stings like a bee! Fighting in such an elegant way, this is Nikka the <Meteor>!”

“See, you can’t just decide who will win the match like that. Don’t make light of Nikka’s potential.”

“It’s just like I heard earlier!”

Flowing from his <Heaven Star Strike> into another attack, Nikka assaulted from below as if trying to gouge the ground. I thought his attack was over after the ‘meteor’ hit the ground, but it seems there’s more to it. He approached Hekaton with a terrifying speed.

I’m curious, can Hekaton really not counterattack?

When he took that blow from Nikka…

He was smiling.

“Onii-chan!”

Ritta was in the front row, and she looked like she was praying as she watched.

Attack after attack, Nikka wasn’t giving any room for Hekaton to fight back.

I’ve been hearing “the match is over” from the spectators around me, but I see it differently.

Hekaton has been smiling this whole time.

That isn’t the face of defeat.

“Kukuku…as I thought, that’s all you have. Oooorah!”

Hekaton suddenly swung his hammer and hit Nikka dead on from the side.

He couldn’t dodge in time.

(TL:あっけなく、当たった。)

Blood spewed from Nikka’s mouth as he flew to the edge of the platform.

“Ugh-!”

“Ooh? I hit you it seems. Maybe it was a fluke? Kuku…”

No, that was calculated.

Nikka’s attacks come in a straight line. Once you get used to it, it would be simple to read his trajectory.

If he was faster things might be different, but there’s no creativity to his attacks.

Nikka couldn’t move due to the immense pain.

Hekaton slowly approached him and brought his hammer down onto Nikka’s arm.

“GYAAAAAAH!”

“Ooh, I managed to hit you again! Today sure is my lucky day!”

“U-uaaaa”

That attack from earlier should have decided the match. Why hasn’t it been stopped?

“That’s right while we’re here, why don’t you wish on that star of yours? Although, it doesn’t matter since I will be winning this match!”

Nikka’s other hand was smashed.

He couldn’t cry out this time, he had fainted from the pain.

Both of his arms were crushed and minced.

“That guy-!”

“Idiot, if you interrupt you’ll be disqualified!”

“But Amane-san! If this continues then Nikka will die!”

“The referee should be stopping it!”

The referee was standing behind Hekaton. Why?

“Onii-chan, please give up already! Please!”

That’s right; he has to surrender. It’s not a match anymore.

“Oi! Ref! Stop the match!”

“Really? You don’t see anything and you want the match to end?”

What does he mean by that…?

Standing in front of the referee…wait…

That guy…

“This is pretty unpleasant to look at. Is your leg the problem?”

(TL:「ひゅんひゅんと目障りな奴だぜ。この足が悪いのか？」)

Hekaton pressed his hammer onto Nikka’s leg. Slowly putting pressure on until it started to become crushed, just to deliver more pain.

(TL: 潰すか潰さないかのギリギリのところで苦痛を与えている。)

“Onii-chan! Noooooooo! Someone! Someone!”

Ritta jumped down from the spectator seat.

“You there, if you want to see an insect flying about, there are better places than this you know. How did this thing reach A-rank anyways? I’m being kind and doing you a

service like this, making sure you can't become an A-rank again. You won't have to die if I do this, right? Is that your sister making all that racket? How pitiful, to have such a careless brother."

I can't stand seeing Ritta crying any more.

I don't care if I'm disqualified.

Just as I was about to jump out at Hekaton, the referee slowly walked to Hekaton and declared him the winner.

"Hey hey! You didn't hear him surrender did you?"

"I can't let this go on anymore."

The referee replied in a monotone voice.

Jeers could be heard coming from the spectators.

Drink caps and trash were being thrown at Hekaton

"Don't participate in this again you murderer~!"

"I'll never let you take a quest from me!"

You can hear a lot of curses and insults being thrown at Hekaton.

Why did he go so far? What's wrong with him?

I want this clenched fist of mine to meet his face.

"J-just what do you think of that, Shitakka-san?"

"This result was determined from the beginning. Nikka's potential wasn't very high in the first place. Hekaton's experience won this fight, just like I said."

"Do you even remember what you said yourself a short while ago!?"

The reporter and commentary tried to lighten things up a bit, but they couldn't settle down the crowd.

The 2nd match will be in about 15 minutes.

I saw Nikka being carried out on a stretcher with Ritta rushing over, so I followed them.

Both of Nikka's hand and legs had plaster on them. It looked really pitiful. There were a lot of healers and priests at the clinic that used Medical magic.

"Onii-chan…Even though I said not to…why…?"

"I'm sorry Ritta…I couldn't show you my courage."

"Courage?"

"I was a bad brother when we were young. I lost every fight and couldn't study well.

Isn't it painful for you to have such an idiotic brother? Despite all that, I managed to become A-rank. It's a small thing, but I wanted to be a brother you could be proud of… I wanted to show you the results of my hard work with that fight….but I wasn't even able to do that, was I? I wanted to become a splendid brother…haha…It seems I was just an annoyance, huh?"

"I don't think of you as annoying, not one bit! But I can't stand seeing Onii-chan in such danger…Please, just understand my feelings…"

Ritta cried while laying her head on her brother's chest. Nikka was gently brushing Ritta's hair.

I see. Everything was for Ritta.

I was participating for myself…Nikka was doing it for someone else.

To become a brother his younger sister could be proud of…

Even though we didn't fight, I feel like I've lost to this person.

"So you were here, Ryua."

"Seigel-san…Roel and Cynthia as well."

"Ryua-chan, how is Nikka doing?"

"I didn't expect so many visitors…Well, I still have a long way to go before I reach my limit. I don't think those words are what I need to say to myself though…hahaha…"

Seigel approached Nikka and brushed his hand along the plaster.

His eyes had hate, sorrow, and tiredness dwelling within them.

"Hekaton…for you to go this far…"

"Just watching made me so angry! How is someone like that an adventurer!? That man is just a scoundrel! Everyone watching was angry as well!"

Cynthia was stomping her feet in anger.

Roel couldn't speak upon seeing Nikka's condition.

"That guy is strong, and he has achievements. That's why."

"Regardless of achievements, I don't want someone like that to be my escort!"

"That guy's specialty is bounty hunting. He takes quests like that."

"That's right."

Hekaton was standing at the entrance to the room.

He had a mocking smile on and entered the room nonchalantly.

I won't let him near Nikka again. I blocked Hekaton's path as he approached Nikka's

bed.

“Ooh, what’s this?”

“Get out.”

“Such a young kid is going to protect him? I heard the entire conversation from earlier you know. Such a sad story. You’re actually quite splendid. Nevertheless, with limbs like that you can’t do anything anymore, can you? You’ll be nursed by your sister for the rest of your life! Hahahahahahahahaahha-”

I seized his collar. Even though Ritta was crying and couldn’t talk back, I won’t just let Hekaton say what he wants. I won’t forgive this guy.

“What do you think you’re doing? Take your hand off me.”

“You’re not human-!”

Just as I was about to strike Hekaton, Seigel held my arm and shook his head.

“Settle this during the match.”

It wasn’t a joke. He was serious.

Although he’s not wrong. If I lashed out here, then it won’t change anything.

I slowly let go of Hekaton, and he laughed triumphantly.

“The match huh…? Yeah. Lose to me, or prove you’re the genuine article.”

Hekaton burst into laughter again while he left.

I don’t think I could get any more infuriated with him.

I’ll teach you your place.

“Isn’t your match soon?”

That’s right. I need to hurry.

My opponent is Amane-san…I wonder how she fights? I have no idea what to expect, but my mind is currently dominated by the thought of beating Hekaton down.

As I walked into the corridor I passed by a shadow.

I didn’t have the time to stop and look, but I’m pretty sure it was Inoro.

Why is he here? I only saw his face briefly, but his eyes seemed cold.

I just let it go as I rushed to the coliseum entrance.

* * *

There was someone staring from behind, but whenever she turned around there was nobody there.

Roel kept turning around each time she felt the chill.

“Roel-chin, what’s wrong?”

“Err, nothing. We need to hurry before Ryua-chan’s match starts!”

Roel left the clinic and double-checked her surroundings. As she thought, nobody was there.

She concluded it had to be her imagination.

Ryua’s match is more important anyways.

In the distance, a shadow that went by unnoticed stood and looked at her.

Chapter 38: Avangard Tougi Taikai (Part 6)

Therefore, we arrive at the second match. A woman was standing before me. She had no weapons, but her body seems really sturdy. Her exposed, dark skin tightened as it was bathed in the sunlight. It seemed like her body was shining.

I had seen her body swell in the waiting room before, perhaps she'll get like that again when she fights.

"2nd Match, Ryua vs. Amane! Shitakka-san, what are your thoughts on this fight?"

"Let me see…if I were to make a comparison it would be between an ant and…no, more like a fight between a dragon and a <Cave Rabbit>. The handle of that young girl's sword is practically spotless, and that lack of use leads me to believe she has little combat experience."

"I recall you saying something similar before, but thank you for your analysis!"

So, a dragon and a rabbit…do I really look that frail? Roel, who's in the spectator seats, knows differently right? But if I don't win this fight, then I won't be able to fight Hekaton.

"Are you going to draw the blade burdening your shoulder? If you are worried about me, you are being unnecessarily kind. I hate being looked down upon, just so you're aware. A person that doesn't honor their opponent in battle is an unsightly bastard."

Her brow wrinkled, and her muscles had already expanded. She seemed quite mad.

She shifted her body into a half-rising stance; she seemed perfectly prepared for this.

Looking down…I never realized it.

I never meant to look down on any of my opponents…I don't intend to do that to her.

I drew my sword in an attempt to satisfy her.

It seemed to have worked because she didn't have that angry expression on her face anymore.

"It seems the contestants are almost ready! First Main Fight Card! She has driven many male opponents into a corner, and leaving them unable to recover she has finally reached the finals! <Heroine of the 100 Empires>, Amane! In this corner is her opponent, having easily defeated the 98th A-rank Benkei, 57th A-rank Baste, as well as the 97th A-rank Griiman for her representative match, our dark horse of this tournament! C-rank <Surprising Girl> Ryua! The match between these two will be starting now!"

"Whether man or woman, I will be merciless to my opponent in combat!"

"Well then, Battle Start!"

Would it be fine for me to fight her seriously? My brute strength alone punched through Griiman's armor…

Ever since leaving the <Caves of Hell>, I haven't been in any danger. After giving it some thought, I realized I came out of it way stronger than I could have ever dreamed of being.

If there was someone stronger than the <King of Destruction> Vanda Lucia…what would I do? However there's no point thinking about that right now since nobody here was as strong as him.

Oh…maybe Tifelia-san?

I haven't tried fighting her yet, but out of all the people I have met since leaving the caves, she was the only one to give me this strange feeling…

I want to try…fighting that person.

Amane charged at me with her swollen body, and her fist flew right into my sword.

I didn't find her strength to be difficult to handle whatsoever, but there was still more force than I expected.

Her merciless fists came flying at me in rapid succession.

I blocked them all with my sword, but there was no time to try to find an opening in her rain of blows.

"So it's a defensive battle you want, huh? Or have you not shown your hand yet? Well then, <Hundred Water Break Palm Bullets>!"

(TL: if someone had a better name for it then tell us 百掌防波弾)

Her attacks became twice as heavy when she said that. It wasn't like any of her hundred punches from before; I could hear the insides of my Mithril sword breaking.

Amane-san has quite a bit of power behind her; this kind of attack is something you couldn't just forget about.

I wonder how much she trained to achieve this level of strength?

If she entered the <Caves of Hell>, she may have reached the bottom faster than me.

Well, I didn't enter the caves knowingly; I just wandered inside.

Any strong person could have cleared it.

Unpleasant thoughts like that began to pop up in my mind as the sound of my breaking sword became clearer.

"Don't rely on weapons! Your body is the only thing you need! Do you understand? If you rely on a weapon, you become a weak woman the moment you don't have it! Training your fists makes those beast-like men worthless opponents! Rely on your body! Not those useless and fickle weapons!"

"Amane-san…sorry…"

"No matter how many times you apologize, you won't earn victory!"

I've been half-hearted towards my opponents until now…

After conquering the <Caves of Hell>, it's highly unlikely that I will lose anymore.

I never thought about the effort that others have put in to become strong…

That's why I apologized. That's why this time, I will answer properly–

with this one punch.

"Amane-san, here I come!"

Up until now, I haven't ever used this much strength in one go.

Amane-san's flesh was torn off and blood spewed out.

A fissure appeared on the platform as if my fist never stopped.

Amane couldn't process what just happened, she was unable to guard the punch and fell on the ground.

There was a huge amount of blood…did I overdo it?

I ran over to her as the referee declared the match over.

"Vi-victor, Ryua!"

The surrounding healers were casting <Heal> while soldiers carried Amane out on a stretcher. Her muscles had been expanded up to this point, but underneath those bulging and shiny muscles was a beautiful woman.

"Did you…just see that?"

"It was like ham being sliced…Amane-chan's body was…was…was…my bride was-!"

"Are they going to use that platform for the next match?"

Cheers could be heard from the spectator stand, and I noticed Tifelia was looking at me.

She had a satisfied smile on her face, I wonder what she was thinking?

Hekaton had his arms crossed with an expressionless face.

"Is that, by chance, a natural star?…That kind of diamond in the rough isn't just a genius. That was definitely the star of the match…"

I have no idea what Rupee is saying.

Kweed was standing behind him, I don't think he even watched my match. He was caressing his scabbard.

Creepy.

* * *

“Do a thorough investigation of that C-rank. I can’t even imagine leaving such a thing alone.”

“No, that girl should join my guild, the <Royal Knights>. I won’t let her wander into a guild with no order or pride.”

“And a representative of your <Royal Knights> guild was defeated in the 3rd round of the preliminaries, no?”

“It couldn’t be helped because the opponent was the <Master Knight>.”

“So the one that gave up was the 3rd rate guild.”

“I’ll take that insult as a challenge.”

The spectator seats were abuzz with reactions to my match.

There were those who recognized my strength, some thought it was a fluke.

Some fights even broke out…

“I wonder why Ryua-chan did that? I’ve never seen her serious before…”

“That Amane-chan is lower ranked than me, but if we just look at her strength, even a superior A-rank would succumb to her. Did you unconsciously come to the conclusion that she was weaker than me just because she is a lower rank than me?”

* * *

Roel was watching over Ryua as she left the match grounds.

The seats in front of her had the other participants sitting in a line.

Among them, there was one wearing a black robe. As soon as she made eye contact, she let out a shriek.

The black-robed person was staring at Roel from a distance.

He never even looked at the fight. His eyes kept their focused gaze on Roel, constantly tracking her, even though she was just one girl in a sea of spectators.

“Roel, is something wrong?”

“N-no, it’s nothing.”

“Is that so?”

“If you aren’t feeling well, why not go rest for a bit? Ryua-chan won’t be having a match for a while anyways.”

“I-I’m fine.”

The black-robed person did not move an inch.

* * *

“It ended in an instant, the outcome was totally unexpected…the biggest uproar of this tournament so far! Now onto the next card! <Sky Crown> Rupee vs. Kweed!”

Kweed was caressing his scabbard, but when his match was about to begin, his mouth turned upwards into a wide grin as he left for the field. His grin looked disgusting.

The fight isn’t for enjoyment. It’s almost as he was pleased about something else.

Rupee stood up from his seat and stopped moving.

I wonder what he’s going to do?

“Oh, star…please assure me…and then the many stars of victory…will be in my hands!”

He looked up and started talking to the sky. Geez, I’ve had enough of these people.

“Shitakka-san, I already know that Rupee uses star magic, but how does Kweed fight?”

“At first glance he looks like a gloomy guy, but he comes to life when he’s fighting. You can say that those long bangs of his can be the key to the fight.”

“Wait a minute, I can’t tell if you’re being serious or not.”

The 2 people standing on the platform don’t even look like they’re interested in each other.

Rupee was still holding his arms out while talking and Kweed continued to caress his scabbard while muttering something to himself.

Even the Referee was weirded out by it and took a step back.

“E-eh, well then. Battle Start!”

It starts. ‘I wonder how they’re going to fight’ is what I thought, but the 2 of them weren’t moving at all. It’s no good if they stay like this. ‘Are the 2 of them unwilling to fight?’ is what I started to think, but then Rupee made the first move.

“Kweed-kun, I can see an omen of the Star of Death in you.”

I can hear something get closer from the sky. Is that the sound of the air being pushed?

The sound quickly passed over the spectator seats, striking fear into the hearts of the audience. With just that, I understood what was coming.

Screams erupted from the stands, and someone even got up and ran away.

A rock was descending from the sky. Although, calling a meteorite would be better.

It’s falling towards the coliseum, so of course it would cause a panic.

It was still far away, but as it got closer, I began to understand just how fast it was.

“<Star Magic: Comet>.”

The meteorite rushed towards the platform. To be precise, it's aimed right at Kweed's sword.

It looked like Kweed raised his sword to the sky and with just that, defended himself from the meteorite.

The meteorite broke apart and fell down to the ground in pieces.

"Fuhi-fuhihi, it's going to be ok since you'll be sucking blood soon! Hihihiihihi!"

He was so different before the match started.

His eyes were bloodshot. Saliva was drooling from the corner of his mouth and he had long, disheveled hair. It was as if he was a totally different person.

He was shaking his shoulders as he was laughing creepily. He hunched his back and placed his sword on it.

"Just as I thought, you've been corrupted. I might not be able to hold back in this situation, but I don't want to be too flashy here.

Now then, I wonder which star I should request-"

For the first time, Rupee used a normal tone.

"J-just now, that was the Star magic we've heard about in rumors! What scale-!"

"However, Rupee hasn't shown his full power yet. No, he can't show it would be more correct. His star magic has a wide area of effect with great destructive power. Like that, he won't be able to use it here."

Certainly, I wonder what would have happened if Kweed wasn't able to block that meteorite. That's dangerous. Roel and the others are here you know.

"The numerous shining stars of illusions and reality, give me the power to create… <Stardust Memory>!"

All eyes were on Rupee as something like a starry sky spread out.

Something like an air bubble appeared there. The starry sky covered only the platform and, at the same time, cut it off.

Kweed was looking around restlessly as he watched the surroundings change, but once he looked at his sword, his mood got restored.

"With this star, you can see all the data that has been recorded. A sword as dangerous as that, surely it's within the memories of the stars.

Anything you do now is pointless. The star is processing the sword's origin, and it will purge you."

(TL:この星々が見てきたものはすべてデータとして記録されている。その物騒な剣も然、きっと星が記憶している。何をしても無駄だよ、データに基づいた星による粛清が行われる)

"That's not something for yOUouu to DEcide!"

When Kweed went for the kill, one of the stars shot directly towards Kweed.

It felt like even the action of killing was sealed off.

Even though it only went as far as grazing his shoulder, Kweed looked like he was going to keel over. He was staggering.

Not ignoring this chance, Rupee used another meteorite attack.

This time there were 3 aiming at Kweed.

It was even faster than before. Kweed, being unable to deal the attack, was once again grazed by the meteorites as they passed by.

His shoulder, waist, and leg were only brushed by the meteors, but it seemed to have dealt considerable damage to him. Kweed screamed as the wind pressure caused him to spin around and fall over.

"Gugi-gigigi-"

"If that star had hit you dead on, you would've lost your life. If I went serious on you, it would take one meteorite. Can you surrender already? Are you really satisfied with relying on your sword so much?"

"I'll kill you! I'll kill you, I'll kill you!…I WILL KIIIIIILL YOOOOOOOOOOOOU!"

A black fog spewed from Kweed's body and was absorbed by his sword. A black aura started emanating from the blade.

Kweed's face didn't even look human anymore. It reminded me more of a reptile. His eyes were protruding from his face, and his mouth was spread out much further than normal. Combine that with his long hair, he looks almost like a monster.

"Kweed's sword transformed him!?"

"It seems like Kweed poured magical power into his blade. He's trying to recover from this hopeless situation."

Are you sure about that? I don't think he has any idea what he's talking about.

I get the feeling magical power wasn't poured into it, but rather his sword absorbed it.

It seems like Kweed is having a hard time breathing as well.

Without fear of meteors, Kweed sprinted at Rupee.

"You still want more…? I have no choice. This may kill you, but please don't resent me for it. <Meteor Clutch>!"

Meteorites approached from all directions, flying at Kweed. They were moving much faster than the previous attack.

He may actually kill Kweed with this.

However, Kweed rotated his body just before impact.

He slashed and slashed, you could hear the meteorites falling to the ground.

As they hit the ground, they were absorbed by Kweed's sword.

"Tsk! Oh, star! Don't let this Evil approach me!"

The surrounding stars shone at the same time, and suddenly meteorites were fired.

"He won't be able to dodge this," is what was plastered on the faces of the spectators.

Some screamed, some cheered, and Rupee's meteors barreled down to kill Kweed.

…the countless stars, and even Rupee, were sliced. Rupee's face showed he had no idea what just happened.

"W-why is it like that…? I'm not being malicious here…but please, throw that blade away…before…you…"

Rupee collapsed before he could finish talking.

Blood pooled onto the match grounds, and the referee was stunned. He was prompted urgently to continue and he declared the match over.

"Victor…Kweed!"

The end was called a little late, but the match ground was covered in cheers. Kweed's bloodshot eyes gave the impression he could go wild at any time.

"What should I do?" I thought, but he obediently descended from the platform.

What kind of sword is that? It's hard to express in words, but something about that sword seems…corrupt.

It was almost like Rupee's blood was absorbed, there was no dripping blood to be seen on Kweed's blade.

Is Rupee still unconscious? I can see him muttering something on the stretcher.

If Tifelia wins her match then she will be fighting Kweed. I wonder what she thinks about that match?

My left shoulder felt somewhat heavy. I turned to look and saw Tifelia-san leaning on it, sleeping. I feel kind of awkward asking her straight out about her thoughts on the match.

Her leaning on me is somewhat bothersome, so I used my arm to prop her into a sitting position.

She instantly opened her eyes, and suddenly closed them and fell on my shoulder again.

She knows her match is next, right…?

* * *

“That sword sure is dangerous.”

Seigel watched the match until the end with a serious face.

Roel and Cynthia were overwhelmed by the bizarre ability Kweed used.

“Dangerous, Seigel-san?”

“Among all the weapons and armor in the world, there are certainly some very strong ones, but they have…side effects. Although, that difference in strength to the point of coming back from such a situation…I’ve never seen something like that before. Just where did he get his hands on such a thing?”

“So something like that won’t show up in a normal market?”

Roel was eating the sweets in her hand, only half were left. Cynthia was in deep thought about something. Roel’s sweet count reduced by one again.

It’s not that Cynthia wasn’t interested in weapons and armor, but it wasn’t her specialty. She couldn’t answer Roel’s question with her lack of knowledge.

“A normal market, huh?”

Seigel was surveying the match grounds. His eyes were drawn to the middle of the platform. He had no basis to go on, but he had a feeling…

Something was lurking there, trying to escape.

Chapter 39: Avangard Tougi Taikai (Part 7)

Siegel went to the clinic to visit Rupee, who was staring at the ceiling.

They ended up forming a party after becoming acquaintances.

Rupee, noticing Seigel's figure in the room, smiled as he welcomed him.

"I saw your match. It was a disaster."

Seigel caught Rupee making a strange expression as he said 'disaster', but he didn't say anything. He had fought that sword in the past himself, so he understood.

"That sword…I don't recognize it."

"It looks like it wasn't even caught by your <Stardust Memory>."

Seigel understood the menacing nature of <Stardust Memory>.

Earlier on, in Rupee's match, Seigel had been eyeing that sword. His exterior may have stayed calm and collected, but he felt the corrupted presence.

"You can say that the Sun saw it. It happened right beneath that bright star, the fight and all was recorded by it. I pull that knowledge out from space and analyze it. That move calculated his movements and traits, predicted how he would act, and sealed all of his techniques. Saying that his counter was foul play is no exaggeration. Is his sword not recorded?"

"He fights like it was recorded, but his movements almost seemed like they belonged to another person."

Somewhat odd, just as he thought. Seigel cast a cold glare around the clinic. Some superior A-ranks have been sent all around the Imperial Capital as security, and they travelled under water so the festival wouldn't be hindered. Every year, many soldiers are dispatched for the festival. Only newcomers are spared by being given some days off or odd jobs. Thankfully, Rupee had used defensive magic before being hit, so he avoided any mortal wounds. Once Rupee was healed, Seigel planned to probe around. He concluded Rupee felt the same.

"Tifelia-san, the match! The match-"

Tifelia was finally woken up by Ryua's stubborn shaking.

She rubbed her eyes and looked around, figuring out why she was woken up.

Without forgetting to say "Good morning", Tifelia ascended to the match ground without her weapon or armor.

Tifelia moved about unsteadily and drowsily as Ryua saw her off, hoping to finally see some of Tifelia's strength.

Ryua was wondering if Tifelia was truly stronger than her. Tifelia let out a large, contrasting yawn to those thoughts.

“It’s finally here! This tournament’s biggest expectation! The appearance of <Master Knight> Tifelia-chan!”

The cheers were vibrating the coliseum, and the spectators created large waves of hands that rolled and rippled through the stands.

There were also some people who wrote things, such as “Tifelia LOVE”. The length of some of those posters was just too much, for the to be able to move the hearts of so many people…

Ryua admired her a little, but…

“*sigh*…so noisy…”

“I want to hear that sigh as I am about to die! No, as I’m dyiiiiiiiiing!”

She placed her hand on her face as the annoying cheers continued on.

That gesture seemed to make her fans burn up even more; they became rabid in the stands with their overflowing enthusiasm.

“And her opponent, the mysterious man, Inoro! With the exception of magic usage, there isn’t any data on him! What in the world will he show us today?”

“Attack magic is probably his specialty.”

“I already know that! Well then, let’s see what happens!” 1st round, 4th match!”

Inoro silently glared towards the bored Tifelia.

He was shorter than Tifelia, almost looking like a child.

Other than his odd robe, he had a mysterious aura about him. Alhough, it was a child versus an adult. The result was obvious from a glance.

‘This isn’t an opponent for the <Master Knight>’ was a common thought among the spectators.

“Tifelia vs. Inoro! Start!”

Even though they were told to start, Tifelia behaved just as she had in the preliminaries, unwilling. Inoro was waiting on Tifelia to make the first move.

“Are both of them just waiting for the other? There aren’t any signs of movement!”

“When you fight against someone at a similar level, the match can be decided in an instant. Really, considering what we know about Inoro, can you grasp his true strength from his appearance?”

Ryua swallowed her saliva while watching them.

She was more curious about Tifelia than Inoro.

Inoro moved first; it seems he ran out of patience.

However, he didn’t use any magic. He slowly approached Tifelia.

“H-hold on! What does Inoro plan to do!? Tifelia-chan is responding-”

Tifelia finally noticed Inoro as he got close, and partly opened her mouth while winking. Inoro thought she was playing dumb.

“Umm, what is it?”

The spectators were expecting a fierce fight, and Ryua had been let down by the outcome before her. “Tifelia-san, what are you doing!?” Ryua felt irritated and she was acting like a child, tapping the floor with her feet.

“<Master Knight> Tifelia. If she judged the opponent unworthy, she wouldn’t even look at them. Just like the data we have on her implies.”

“*Sigh* is that so?”

“However, that will be a fatal decision.”

Standing before Tifelia, Inoro quickly cut his own hand.

Blood appeared on Tifelia.

Her mouth was still partly open, even she was surprised from this.

She didn’t wipe the dripping blood, instead she finally looked at her opponent from his head to his feet.

“Umm…how are you going to clean this?”

“You don’t need to worry. The need to pay for it will soon disappear, since you’ll be going to the other side soon. You and that stupid face you’re making.”

“Eh, I really don’t feel like disappearing.”

“…I give up.”

The live reporter, commentary, and spectators all went silent while watching the development in front of them. You couldn’t even call this a match. The referee didn’t even respond to Inoro’s “I give up”. He repeated himself to make sure the referee heard him.

“Ha? Sorry, what?”

“I said I give up. The victory goes to Tifelia.”

The match was aborted by Inoro, and he descended from the match grounds, vanishing into the waiting room.

“*Sigh*” Tifelia seems to want to say something, but there was nothing to be delighted about. She followed suit and also descended from the match grounds.

Although Ryua had been looking forward to the fight, she didn’t understand why it ended like it did. It was a huge letdown. She finally released her clenched fist.

"It ended after some blood spilled? What's with that…"

Ryua wasn't really asking anyone, she was just talking to herself.

"Ah geez…the blood won't come off…*sigh*…but I saw something that works before. If you tap and cover it with the end of a daikon…I want to tap it…"

Tifelia's gaze changed from her dirtied clothes to Ryua.

She smiled at Ryua, and Ryua couldn't help but return a fake smile.

Ever since Ryua had left the <Caves of Hell>, she hadn't met a person like Tifelia before.

"It's going to be your match next, right? I watched your previous fight closely. It was amazing. You were going easy, but to have that much power…"

"So you weren't sleeping…"

This person easily saw through Ryua and that she had been going easy. Ryua thought if it was this person, then she could easily read her mind.

"Ah, it'll be your turn very shortly, you know."

"Well then, it's the 2nd round of the finals! 1st match! Ryua vs. Hekaton!"

Hekaton was already on the match grounds in a daunting pose.

Ryua jumped towards the platform, a little disorganized. Hekaton was laughing.

He looked down at everything. Ryua hated this large person.

Considering what happened with Ritta, Ryua wondered what she'll do in this match.

She came to a swift conclusion. Hekaton wasn't fazed when he saw Amane get one-shot, and it also seems like he considers this match already won.

He crushes his opponents, tramples their heart, and destroys them.

It was like that time with Gametts. Ryua's heart was smothered in fury, a blue flame silently burning.

"You, don't be thinking that you can down me in one blow like you did that muscle woman."

"I think I can, you know."

Ryua didn't want to talk to Hekaton anymore, she felt like vomit would come out.

She had been speaking in a low tone. You couldn't think of her as a little girl, she was more like a knife.

"Brat."

Hekaton rotated his prided hammer once in the sky and then swung it down to strike

the platform. If his opponent had been a more normal person, then they would have felt threatened.

Ryua wasn't affected at all.

The <Caves of Hell> had monsters that made your hair stand on end.

Watching this adult swinging his toy hammer around made her feel nothing.

"Shitakka-san! That girl, with her monster-like strength, is she well matched against Hekaton?"

"It depends entirely on potential. You can't determine how strong someone is before the match."

"This guy. Only saying potential."

The referee stood between the two of them and finally announced the start of the match.

The atmosphere was unusual between Hekaton and Ryua, the referee instantly took a step back from them.

"Now then, I'll be starting. Also, I'll tell you something good. The King over there will appreciate even someone like me. In short, strength is justice. Did you listen to him earlier? I murdered someone last time, but I wasn't barred from participating this time. What does that tell you?"

Hekaton held his hammer with two hands and brandished it like he did earlier. It seems like he will put as much strength as he can into every strike.

A crack and the rumbling ground from a single strike shows how strong he is.

However, Ryua had a look that said "So?"

Her eyes stayed focused, and her mouth was still. It was evident that Ryua didn't regard Hekaton as an opponent.

"Amane-san was an amazing person. That's why I reflected on the way I fought against her. But for you, it's different."

"Stop your babbling!"

He moved his hammer to his left hand and without delay struck at Ryua.

"I won't be hit by such a thing," Ryua said as she dodged. Hekaton's hammer suddenly switched into his other hand and was swung at her again.

Like bullet holes, the amount of stamps that the hammer made on the platform increased.

He was controlling his hammer like he was beating a drum, rhythmically striking at Ryua.

"HeiHei! Heiheihei!"

His tone matched the timing of the bullet hole being made. Due to the rumbling it caused, many of the spectators were screaming, and some of the female spectators were crying.

The storm of hammer attacks were evaded easily, Ryua dodged to the beat.

“W-what an intense attack! Ryua isn’t even being given a chance to fight back!”

“This is Hekaton’s <Grand Ram>. The strikes cover a large area and the vibrations prevent the opponent from taking a proper stance. This drains their stamina, and when they get tired the attack will eventually hit. Even if the opponent is an expert, he would have to avoid every strike from start to finish. If you look closely at Hekaton, it seems like he enjoys driving his opponents into a corner like this.”

“It feels like we finally received a proper explanation this time around!”

Hekaton’s large hammer kept falling towards Ryua.

The match platform had become the drum for Hekaton’s beat, and the shockwaves from each swing were attacking Ryua.

“Yoiyoiyoi! Yoiyoiyotto!”

The match platform had been destroyed to the point where it couldn’t be used anymore. Since it was known that A-ranked fighters would be participating, the match grounds had been made of a stone that was almost as hard as orihalcon. Even so, it had been dented by the sheer force of the hammer.

Hekaton was trying to instill fear into Ryua with his strength. He was under the impression she was getting exhausted.

However, her expression hadn’t changed.

* * *

“That Ryua, just what is she doing?”

“Oh! Gantetsu-san, you came.”

“It doesn’t seem like she’s unable to resist but more like she doesn’t want to. Seigel, what do you think?”

“It seems the situation at the clinic is in her head. She probably has a child-like scheme.”

“Ryua-han ih noht heeeming at all!”

(ED: Roel is eating while talking)

Roel was stuffing her mouth with a buttered potato while desperately protesting, but she was only able to persuade them after swallowing and speaking properly.

* * *

“Do you think that you can keep evading?”

Ryua wasn't replying as usual, she just kept evading his hammer. "I wonder if I should finish him in one hit…" Ryua thought, but she decided to wait a little more. She wanted to utterly crush him.

"So you hate me? Look around and think a little. There will always be someone that laughs down at those in front of them. To point out the weak from a group and exclude them, keeping them safe and giving them peace of mind. Human beings can't do that, you know?"

While he was talking, little sparks of electricity were arcing from his arm to his hammer.

The noise slowly increased in volume, and eventually the electricity influxed his entire hammer.

"Seeing scum like that rise up to A-rank makes me excited, once again I can crush…"

The expressionless Hekaton finally showed an unpleasant smile.

Ryua couldn't help but feel disgusted looking at it.

"More ugly than a monster," was her impression.

She understood that the "scum" insult was aimed at Nikka.

She clenched her teeth, but she didn't draw her sword.

"You're worse than Grundom."

Neither Grundom nor Hekaton can change. No matter what Ryua says, it won't move them. Hekaton, as if ending the banter, jumped into the air. He assumed a stance, preparing to swing his hammer.

He jumped high enough to see over the walls of the coliseum, it was his way of showing off his strength.

"I'll teach you! In the end, it's all about power! No matter what they do, if they don't have power then you can do nothing but howl like a loser! You can't protect anything without power! You crumble in the face of reality! That's how that guy ended up…and with this, you might die. Resent me as much as you want!

THOOOOOOOR HAMMEEEEER!"

Electricity streamed from his hammer and fell, it wasn't aimed at Ryua but rather the center of the platform.

Not even a floor monster, let alone a human, could bear the voltage of that bolt. All of the cells in the body would be annihilated, and it would cease to exist. This was Hekaton's strongest skill: . The light and sound this move emitted caused the spectators to be blinded, most were covering their heads and protecting their bodies as much as they could.

This skill was fear incarnate.

He planned to kill Ryua from the start.

Originally he had been fine with whatever, but “Crush the spoiled brat!” was his only purpose at this point.

He felt no greater pleasure than at this moment, achieving his goal.

This was the only time he felt any pleasure.

“What the…”

——The light disappeared, and standing in the middle of the platform was Ryua.

Hekaton’s smile vanished.

Ryua had dared to take on the full brunt of his <Thor Hammer>.

She pinned the hammer with one hand.

The current had long since scattered, in front of him wasn’t the form of a helpless girl.

Cracks started to appear in his hammer, and it was smashed to pieces.

With just her grip, his special weapon was pulverized.

Hekaton was just…looking.

“Old man, you’re weak.”

With that one phrase, Hekaton became filled with rage.

With his hammer broken, he began to attack Ryua with his fists.

But with his strongest attack, <Thor Hammer>, being defended against so easily, brute strength wasn’t going to work either.

“You, you fucking braaaaaaaaaaat!! Don’t look down on us adults! Just who raised this arrogant girl!?

“So weak, you’re so weak. You put on such a big act, but I’m way stronger than you.”

“DIEEE!”

Even without a weapon, Hekaton is by no means weak.

With his physique and brute strength, his unarmed prowess is beyond that of a monk’s.

However, if one of the monsters from the <Caves of Hell>, where Ryua fought, were to leave the dungeon, they can destroy the world. That’s how strong the monsters there are.

Ryua didn’t have any way of knowing the details of the monsters inside the <Caves of Hell>.

Within it, she fought a monster called <Gigas Atlas> that, with just one punch, can destroy a country.

Ryua recalled that giant, even though she didn't know it had such a name, while purposely letting Hekaton hit her on the head.

"Gi-giyaaaaaaaaa!"

It was like punching something harder than steel; Hekaton's fist took damage.

Hekaton's right hand was completely broken.

"Running away from something you can't do, something you can't face. Trampled with regrettable thoughts as if cursed. Ever since I was a child, I have always endured it. You didn't have to go that far when you fought Nikka. After we're done here, apologize."

"J-just what are you babbling about you braaaat!"

He punched out with his remaining left hand, then a kick. He wasn't able to move the girl standing there an inch. Hekaton's pride wouldn't let him recognize their difference in strength.

"J-just what kind of support magic did you get? Don't you know the rules? This is a f-foul play you know! Referee! Disqualify this guy!"

"I won't. From what I have seen, there wasn't any kind of support magic used this whole time…"

"You blockhead! How can you say that? Oi! Can't you see? This guy is cheating! You understand, right!?"

Those in the audience; the participants waiting in standby, Tifelia and Kweed; and the King who was overlooking all, Hekaton raised his voice for everyone to hear; seeking someone with the same opinion.

Pathetic. Anyone he looked to would immediately look away.

Tifelia was only interested in Ryua. She was the only one she was looking at. Since the very beginning, she was never interested in Hekaton.

Most likely, that voice didn't even reach her ears.

"Hekaton, you lose."

"So noisy, would you shut up!?"

No matter what he does, the situation isn't going to get any better.

The referee was also surprised by Ryua's strength, but was even more shocked by this lastest exchange.

"Y-you, what's your level!?

Answer me! Answer me! Answer me!"

"999…"

"Oi, referee! This guy is doping!"

Ryua planned to end this now.

She would crush Hekaton's self-confidence and make him take back what he said to Nikka at the clinic.

That was what she thought at first.

That thought was immediately lost after Hekaton uttered his next words.

"That brat…isn't she your companion? Hehehehe, don't look down on the <Crusher>. If I don't like someone, then I will chase them until they are one with the earth. You understand right? Because of you, your little blonde friend is going to experience something horrible.

Hihihihihihi…now then, what would yo-ku!"

Those were Hekaton's last words.

Ryua's fist met with Hekaton's cheek.

(TL: I'm shipping fist x cheek)

(ED: seconded. this is my OTP)

(neo: Here's a picture http://goo.gl/x3mIzL)

His skull was pulverized as her fist easily dug into the side of his head. Hekaton's body crashed right under the spectator seats.

All of his teeth were broken, his whole body was flinching and he lost consciousness.

The wall crumbled and the rubble fell onto Hekaton.

It all happened so fast that the referee wasn't able to react and was watching, dumbfounded.

"Ha!? Ah, let's see."

The referee rushed over to Hekaton's side, before soon announcing Ryua's victory.

"Victor…Ryua."

Though they were noisy up until the middle of the match, the live reporter and the commentary was silent, completely speechless.

They were too overwhelmed to think due to Ryua's inhuman like strength.

The King's expression didn't change after watching the match.

However, he was clenching his hand. He was delighted about something.

The only ones who were happy and shouting 'Banzai' from the seats were Roel and Cynthia.

Gantetsu, who knew of Ryua's strength during the incident, had no comment.

“Just as I thought, she’s a kid.”

Seigel let out a sigh after his murmur, it didn’t reach the ears of Roel who was delighted.

“Well…ufufufufu…”

Tifelia was in a good mood as she tapped her feet, unsuitable for a venue which was still taken aback from what had happened.

Several seconds after the declaration of the end of the match, the crowd began to go wild.

Chapter 40: Avangard Tougi Taikai (Part 8)

The spectator seats started to empty during the break time.

There were some people walking around, some sleeping, and even some just munching away.

People were startled as I passed by them, and the gazes started to pile up.

"Your power will really shine with the <Royal Knights>!"

"If possible, I want you to join us. We're still not ready for this, nothing but terrible floor monsters-"

"E-eh, ah, I still have something to do-"

"She's embarrassed! How cute!"

"Ah…s-stop it…mugyu-"

There were various guilds inviting me left and right, and even some people who hugged me. It seems that there's a guild besides Amane's that is all women. Almost every guild that approached me was searching for strong people.

I didn't even consider that people would be scouting for new members while I was fighting.

I became really embarrassed upon realizing that.

Up until now, nobody has given me so much attention. I don't know if this is a good or bad thing.

I managed to slip away from that troubling situation.

It seems like Tifelia's next match will be in 30 minutes, so I decided to talk to Roel and everyone else to kill time.

Nikka told Ritta to come and watch the match, it seems like Ritta also came to watch my fight.

Ritta had been somewhere in the distance, it seems she became my fan along the way.

Unfortunately, her favourite was Tifelia, so I'm number 2 to her.

"Amazing, why are you so strong even though you're just a C-rank?"

"Please, let us listen to your adventures!"

The barrage of questions overhwhelmed me. I'm originally bad at conversations, so I don't know how to properly tell my story. Almost nobody was able to follow along.

Roel was the exception, she was able to understand me. Thanks to her being there, Ritta's eyes were glistening.

She’s here since it’s her day off from her soldier duties.

“It’s unusual to have a day off during such a busy time. Up until last year, this event was so busy and a lot of soldiers were done in by the atmosphere. Most of the newbies collapsed. I remember a time when even I, Gantetsu, was that busy.”

“There’s also a night shift for the soldiers, right? That’s gotta be difficult since people are used to sleeping at night.”

“It would be relentless to those guys who only work to make money. If you don’t love your job, you won’t do the work well.”

Gantetsu and Cynthia were talking about jobs. I decided to leave them alone since they were so into the conversation. Ritta was enrapt from talking to Roel and myself, and with great excitement, she asked about Roel’s <Fire Rod> .

“Fire comes out from this!?”

“Yeah, it completely burns what it touches.”

“Completely!? It’s expensive, right?”

“Probably, but I got it as a gift you know.”

She’s telling a little bit of a fib there. She doesn’t completely burn them, but turns them into ashes. I’ve seen it happen a lot of times. I think it’s best to stay silent this time though.

“Ryua-san, you’re the same age as me, right? That’s amazing…I need to work hard-”

“Ritta, why did you join the castle soldiers?”

“I wanted to get close to Tifelia-san…I’m happy just being by her side.”

Was that her sole reason for becoming a soldier?

I definitely couldn’t do it. I agree with Gantetsu that being a soldier is relentless. I became an adventurer due to how things ended up going, but it would be impossible for me to become a castle soldier, even if asked.

“Ah, Ryua-san is also fantastic, I respect you a lot.”

She didn’t have to follow up like that…

Suddenly, I saw Seigel enter my field of vision. I stopped for a moment while looking at him. He sat in his seat and placed his elbow onto his knee, opening his mouth to speak to me.

“….You looked down on Hekaton as you fought him, Ryua.”

It was rare to see Seigel without his gaggle of girls. He was speaking in a serious tone, and he wasn’t looking at me while talking.

This isn’t like Seigel, being so serious.

"You were carelessly inviting death. After all this time we've been together, I didn't want to preach to you about it, but did you notice? Just like how Hekaton crushes people, you crushed him. At that moment, you and he were the same kind of person."

"Same kind…? That guy and me…"

"You beat him down just like he does to others."

"I…did the same thing as that guy…"

I fought back by punishing him. I didn't think it was a bad thing to do, but Seigel's words weigh heavily on me.

I mimicked Hekaton's way of fighting.

That trash.

"I'm not trying to blame you for it. If you leave here today with the understanding of what you did in your heart, it's not a loss."

Everyone was silent.

Even though Roel would always cover for me, she was attentively listening to Seigel. Cynthia was also keeping her mouth shut.

"Though, I also just recently charged Gametts without thinking!"

His attitude took a 180 and he laughed as if deceiving himself.

Seigel had done the same thing as me–taking revenge because someone wronged another.

I also went to beat Gametts.

Why…even though this situation right now should be the same…why?

I couldn't stop thinking about it.

"Oh, it looks like Tifelia's match is about to begin."

As if changing the topic, Seigel pointed at Tifelia-san who was standing on the match platform. I'm happy to see her fight again, but last time was a complete let down. The opponent just gave up, what the hell was that about?

If he didn't come to fight, why did he participate?

"Semifinal 2nd match! Tifelia-chan vs. Kweed! Will <Master Knight> the show her prowess this time around?"

"Eeh, well, she might."

"Shitakka-san, it's fine if it's impossible to talk about, you know?"

Yeah, yeah, just what does <Master Knight> mean?

She didn’t even carry a sword and was standing there with just casual clothes. I can’t see a knight standing there.

Her atmosphere is extremely disconnected from the match, it almost seemed like she would suddenly start cooking after this match.

Kweed, compared to the match before, had dangerous eyes.

Drool was dripping from the corner of his mouth, and he was holding his sword with both hands while hunching over.

“Now then, I wonder what Tifelia will do about that sword?”

“What are you saying? It’s Tifelia, she’ll easily win.”

“I didn’t mean that, you know.”

I totally didn’t understand so I stopped asking.

I’ll figure it out once the match starts.

Tifelia-san started out sluggish again-

—no, the situation is different this time.

With only her sigh, it felt like the very air around them was shaking.

You could tell she saw Kweed as an opponent since she had been looking at him this whole time, unlike her other fights.

Could Kweed possibly be someone she is wary of?

From what Seigel said, it’s actually the sword, not Kweed.

“Battle Start!”

Kweed slashed Tifelia before the referee finished his announcement. It was quite the intense slash, but I think most people could dodge it.

Tifelia-san avoided it with barely any movement.

You could hear a dry sound as she moved; she looked rather carefree as she dodged.

“Ihihi! That was dangerous…ain’t you too good at this?!”

“*Sigh*….even though I would normally ignore this, the king ordered me…aaaah…but letting something like this go would be a bad thing to do, as a person…even so, annoying…so annoying…”

She kept avoiding Kweed’s slashes, with a bored and annoyed look on her face.

Kweed wasn’t discouraged, rather he was getting more excited as he vigorously attacked over and over, leaving no space for Tifelia-san to fight back.

Well, I say that, but it looks more like she can’t be bothered to fight back.

“Though, I even forgot my sword…I need to deal with this somehow….<Saint Sword>”

Light shot up from Tifelia-san’s hand.

The pillar of light slowly molded into a sword.

Tifelia-san, now engulfed by a radiant light, grasped the sword with her hand.

“I-it appeared?! One of the <Master Knight>’s <Omni-blade> techniques! Not even high class mage fighters can create such a radiant magic blade! Now it seems Tifelia-chan is showing us her fighting stance!”

“I was just about to say that.”

“Tifelia-chan is finally holding a weapon! How will Kweed cope with this?!”

Tifelia-san kept lazily avoiding Kweed. Is it just me, or is Kweed getting faster…?

Suddenly, that black fog from before leaked out of Kweed’s body again and went straight into the sword. Exactly like when Rupee was downed in one hit.

“Gihii! More, more, more, more, more! Grow! More power!”

“Aaah, geez…why did he have to bring that troublesome ability out…”

Kweed renewed his assault, but Tifelia-san blocked it with her <Saint Sword> . A radiant light slowly leaked from the <Saint Sword> and wrapped around Kweed’s blade.

He became flustered, seeing something abnormal happening to his sword.

“Gihii?”

“This will be over soon, ok? Don’t worry, just please stay still.”

Kweed had ignored her words, he was too focused on what was happening to his sword.

The light suddenly flickered.

“Gihii? Gihihihihihihi~”

After the light faded, nothing had changed with Kweed’s sword. He seemed relieved. Once again, Kweed began attacking Tifelia-san.

“Oh my…was that not enough…? Geez, so annoying…I have no choice it seems. <Weapon Break>.”

Tifelia totally ignored the large storm of slashes, like they were feathers being thrown at her. She casually walked up to Kweed and lightly hit his sword with her <Saint Sword> .

Clunk, the contact was over as fast as it happened, that sound rang out clear through the stadium.

Kweed’s blade was instantly broken into pieces.

He could only stare at the hilt remaining in his hand.

His eyes were swimming as he glanced all around, suddenly, he collapsed onto the ground.

It seems he lost consciousness, he was lying perfectly still and not moving a single inch.

"Referee-san, this is the end, right?"

"Ah, yes! Victor, Tifelia!"

Kweed collapsed from having his weapon broken? It didn't seem like any of the spectators were curious about that, they were in an uproar, delighted about Tifelia-san's victory.

"Ok ok, thank you. Make sure to take care of that person, since I'll be taking care of this thing."

Tifelia-san picked up the fragments of the sword she broke and leisurely walked out of the match grounds. Just what in the world was that? I wonder why she did that?

The moment that sword was broken, Kweed collapsed.

It was as if the sword itself was Kweed's heart.

I gazed towards Kweed who was being carried out on a stretcher, but I still don't know the answer.

"Seigel, what do you think?"

"That sword was in cursed in some way, or-"

Curse.

That's right, and now I wonder why Kweed had used such a sword.

I don't understand it.

"What I'm curious about is why Tifelia collected the weapon fragments. In all likelihood, the King ordered her to do it"

"The King did?"

"An S rank is already beyond a simple Adventurer. Even that really trouble avoiding Tifelia would abide by anything the king orders."

"Seigel-san, about the curse inside the weapon. If the weapon is broken, does it make you collapse?"

"Beyond a simple adventurer" I was attracted to that really interesting point. I was about to ask a question but Roel interrupted by asking a question.

"Each of them has a different compensation. Beyond that, I can't tell you much more. It's not really my specialty."

—-Suddenly, far away behind us, in the spectator seats, I felt a presence.

It was not blood thirst, it was a strange presence.

I turned around and at the same time, I saw a shadow quickly disappear.

What was that just now?

“Ryua, what is it? the next match is the Finals you know? You opponent is that Tifelia. You saw that match just now, right? That was the true meaning of <Master Knight>. <Omni-blade>Techniques.”

“O-omni-blade?”

“A <Master Knight> possesses about 10,000 sword techniques. Among those, there is a technique which a master swordsman mastered over decades. Summing up Tifelia’s strength… Even if all A-ranks attack her, she wouldn’t get a scratch. That’s what kind of opponent she is.”

It’s mortifying if it’s an opponent who can even overturn my 10 years in the Caves of Hell.

“I wonder just how amazing Tifelia-san is”. I’m absolutely much stronger.

That is the only thing that I will absolutely believe.

—-Because I am.

I am?

I am…?

Right now, I wonder what I was about to think.

Sometimes, I feel really uncomfortable. Even though I am myself, it’s like I am not myself.

Now that I think about it, I feel like there was something like this before too.

Right, at that time—–

* * *

“Tifelia, did you bring it?”

“Yes, right here.”

Tifelia presented a cloth that held the fragments to the King.

Usually, she was a woman that even abandoned her responsibility. She was lazy, but even this time she would bow her head.

If this was just a cursed weapon, the King wouldn’t even order such a thing by himself.

She may have been called because it was urgent. Tifelia didn’t understand.

“My King, I will be receiving it.”

The Prime Minister, Bermund. He had a bad appearance. He moved closer to Tifelia.

Tifelia normally isn’t interested in any other people, but she had a feeling of hate towards this man.

The reason wasn’t merely because he had an ugly old face.

He manages most of the official business in the kingdom. He only gets around 2 hours of sleep according to rumors. He is closer to the king than any bodyguard, and also took on the role as the food poisoning tester. To volunteer that much, he was being too attached to the king.

Having this strange sense of patriotism, it was one of the reasons she hated him.

From her mouth, only one word was fit for him. Disgusting. Right now, he isn’t even worth being called a person.

In Tifelia’s mind, she was scorning him.

“Umu, well done. Keep up the good word, I wish for a good match, you know?”

The king was not the one that uttered it. Those were Bermund’s words, it was something like a proxy.

Tifelia understood that it was futile to ask. Just as she was asked, she went back towards the Match Ground.

“…really disgusting.”

She had a loathsome face, similar to that of a demon without a shred humanity. It was that brutal.

Chapter 41: Avangard Tougi Taikai (End)

Today is the climax of the Tougi Taikai–the finals. The cheers during the matches before were incomparable to how it is now.

Coupled with Tifelia's popularity, there was even a banner waving "L-O-V-E" displayed there. Many people had their sights on Tifelia, but the dark horse Ryua was one of the hot stocks.

"The final match is upon us! No one has won against this person no matter what they do, <Master Knight> Tifelia! And the girl who reached the finals with great vigor, Ryua! Whether you cry or laugh, right now in this place, the victor will be decided!"

Tifelia was standing on the Match Grounds, but she was different compared to the matches before; she had a sword her hand, going so far as to picking up her sword from home before the final match, she was feeling that excited.

Twilight Bringer is the name of her weapon.

A combination of both a skilled craftsman and a rare material produced a weapon that only she can handle; there is only one in the whole world.

Seeing that sword, she remembered a tinge of anxiety.

Ryua doesn't know about the sword, but regarding her Mithril Sword, which Amane was hitting, it was not in a good condition.

Her sword was full of cracks; can it take on Tifelia's weapon?

Ryua stared at Tifelia, her expression wasn't like her usual smile, she was facing her with sharp eyes.

"That sword, its condition isn't looking too good. Is it okay?"

"It's fine."

"Is that so……"

Focusing on the air around Tifelia, it was as if the whole coliseum was attacked by a strong wind with her at the center of it. Spectators screamed as their personal belongings were blown everywhere from the wind. A crack appeared below Tifelia on the match grounds that were just fixed.

"Umm, you know I don't understand it. To go this far……are you looking down on me? Such a thing hasn't happened before, that's why… I didn't expect this far…….for my anger to go into my head; I'm irritated. For my emotions to become something like this…"

Master Knights, or S-rankers, have their pride. Without considering the behavior of her opponent, Tifelia was quietly enraged towards Ryua's composure. At a glimpse, she looks gentle, but to tell you the truth, it wasn't like that at the center of the arena. Although the words weren't able to do it, Ryua felt it on her skin.

"Although Tifelia-san didn't fight that Inoro guy honestly."

"That's not true, you know."

"Lies."

"It's not."

Flatly rejecting it, she was expressionless as she said it. Her expression showed that she wouldn't allow any more rebuttals. It was almost time for the referee to announce the start of the match. This time, the voices of the noisy live reporter and commentator didn't reach Ryua's ears. Ryua slowly entered an attacking posture.

"Battle start." Ryua heard those words. Up until now, her opponent's strength is extraordinary. Ryua realized it in an instant as their distance grew shorter. It was not that she couldn't catch her speed, but she wasn't shown that she was serious yet, Ryua understood that. "If that's the case, then I should ask this way." Ryua took one swing towards Tifelia. However, the high-pitched sound of metal chimed; it was stopped.

"It sure is heavy."

From those murmurs, you couldn't feel any impatience. Those words were effectively saying, "So that's all."

"<Weapon Break>."

Without a need to even hear that murmur, Ryua evaded the hit. Ryua understood her weapon would share the fate of Kweed's blade in an instant due to her ample experience.

"<Burst Braver>."

Tifelia swung horizontally, and an explosion quickly followed ahead. Ryua wouldn't be able to evade it. There was only one way, and that was to take it head on.

"<Sonic Ripper>!"

The vacuum-like wave slashed and shaved off the match grounds while crushing the explosions.

Her attention didn't waver. If she was careless for a moment, Tifelia would land a direct hit on her.

However, Tifelia was only defenseless for an instant.

"<Reflect Parry>."

In only an instant, a barrier appeared before her, erasing the slash.

"……..So that sword can rival mine this far. I didn't think that it would make me use <Reflect Parry> in this situation. Your attack was strong enough that my barrier was unable to reflect it….."

"You too Tifelia-san, just how many techniques do you have…"

"Who knows? After going over 100, I stopped counting."

Just now, she wasn't able to properly measure Ryua's strength, but that was the reason for her carelessness.

The other Master Knights would scold her for her mistake, but at the same time, Ryua was verified as a worthy opponent.

She licked her lips and silently looked at Ryua.

With the glossiness of her lips, Ryua had a bewitching image of her.

Up until now, the spectators would be holding out one hand while watching, but right now, their hands came to a halt.

Everyone on the Venue was confident that Tifelia would win.

However, trying to open the cover and see, their breaths were overwhelmed by the development.

Their curiosity regarding that one girl called Ryua had strengthened even more.

"Se-Seigel-san. Tifelia sure is strong-"

"Of course she is, but it feels like Ryua is on par with her."

Roel's drink containers had accumulated over time, but her drinking stagnated once the match started.

Cynthia was also rooted to her spot, as if praying.

"*Sigh*…If I knew it was going to be like this I would've worn my armor…Your sword there, maybe this will be a tie?"

Ryua had not been truly serious so far.

She has never and will never be able to seriously take out a human.

It's probably something from her childhood; whenever she gets close, she would suddenly stop.

The earlier <Sonic Ripper> was much weaker than when she fought Vanda Lucia.

If it stays like this, then she may not be able to end it. Thinking along those lines, she became a little more serious.

"Tifelia-san."

"Yes?"

"The rest of this fight won't be like earlier."

"Ufufufufu, I wonder how many years it's been since I received such a warning… ufufufu…"

Once again, she licked her lips.

Responding to Ryua's words, she pointed her sword at Ryua.

Tifelia had a stance saying she would receive whatever Ryua threw at her. Packing power into her feet and kicking the ground, Ryua closed the gap in an instant.

"….Tsu!"

"Here goes!"

It was quite different from the attack Ryua had originally used.

Tifelia didn't show a surprised expression.

She had waited for this, but she had been careless.

For a very long time, spanning from months into years, Tifelia had not fought anyone that put her life in danger.

From a young age, her father neglected her, and not a single person interacted with her.

Becoming strong was fun for her.

By persevering, she was slowly able to attain the strength she longed for. Merely by seeing a master swordsman use a skill, her ability to imitate bloomed.

After some time, she was called out by a master swordsman living at the Imperial Court. Even he was defeated.

No matter the technique or opponent, nobody could suppress the flame that was Tifelia.

Before realizing it, she had become a <Master Knight>.

—-I wonder when fighting became uninteresting…

Ryua's <Mithril Sword> clashed with Tifelia's <Twilight Bringer> while Tifelia was reminiscing about her past.

On contact, the <Mithril Sword> and <Twilight Bringer> broke. The mithril blade spun in the air, making a metallic ringing as it hit the platform.

The colosseum went silent.

Ryua stopped her pursuit and Tifelia merely stood in place while staring at her <Twilight Bringer>.

"For a mere Mithril Sword to break this…absurd."

She took down her defenseless arms. Ryua, standing before Tifelia, readied her fist and took a stance once again.

"It's not just sheer strength…Other than this crazy conclusion, everything else is unnecessary. Fufufu…I apologize for not wearing any armor."

“Even without my weapon, I will still fight.”

Ryua was still raring to fight. Tifelia released her broken blade, letting it drop to the ground.

“Once more, in the future, I want to try and properly fight against you. I give up.”

Tifelia bowed her head.

Ryua’s eyes went wide in shock, stunned by those words.

The referee was flabbergasted and couldn’t make sense of the situation.

“I lost, you know? I give up.”

Once again, Tifelia politely bowed. The entire venue started spitting out questions. Tifelia’s loss was quickly declared, and her fans started making a racket.

“It really is starting to turn noisy. Referee-san, please hurry.”

“A-ah. Is it really fine?”

“You don’t need to confirm it.”

“W-well then, the champion is…Ryua!”

If Tifelia won, high pitched cheers may have been raised.

There was only a sorry amount of applause and a small amount of praises that wrapped the Colosseum.

“*Sigh* I’m exhausted…”

The first one who didn’t understand was Ryua.

This person still wasn’t serious, so she needs to know what her real intentions are.

Like an incomplete combustion, Ryua couldn’t think of any other words but the situation was really like that.

“Why is it like that…the swords only broke.”

“Next time, please bring a proper weapon. I will also wear the armor <The Genuine Article of the Master Knight> and then I will go for it.

Moreover, the two of us must not get serious here…ufufufufu.”

Tifelia teasingly laughed, the feeling from her earlier was totally gone. It was the usual silly woman.

Ryua exerted strength on her shoulder.

“Did you understand that I wasn’t serious?”

“Oh my, I’m being looked down upon. For sure, I didn’t receive your seriousness…fufu.”

She gave a deviating reply. Tifelia was giggling and laughing.

“We can both get serious” it was sure to be like that, Ryua gave a single nod.

If Ryua got serious right now, even the spectator seats would get bisected.

It was like that during the time with Vanda Lucia; if she fought a little bit longer, the caves would start making things dangerous.

Basing on that and even this fight, Ryua may have been unconsciously saving her power.

“Umu, it looks like it ended.”

The king stood up from his throne.

He didn’t plan to rebuke Tifelia’s loss. It was not like the previous years where she sometimes wanted to participate; she came and reported her purpose this time. Just by understanding that, he was satisfied. Certainly, to discover the outstanding talent called Ryua, he was pleased.

“Just as I thought, it was Ryua’s win!”

“Y-yeah.”

That Tifelia admitted her own loss, Seigel was still unable to believe it.

However, Roel Cynthia and the soldier girl named Ritta sitting beside him didn’t mind that fact and were only delighted and celebrating Ryua’s victory.

“Hurray, Hurray” the 3 of them were in high spirits, that’s why the seniors Seigel and Gantetsu were acting like they didn’t know them.

“Well…let’s say that I’m not that young anymore.”

“Yeah…I’ve already become an old man.”

Before long, the Tougi Taikai had begun it’s closing ceremony.

Above the Match Grounds, the speech regarding the long battle of the brave warriors was happening.

The podium was decorated with exaggerated ornaments, and inside the king was laying in wait.

“S-somehow I might be getting nervous.”

“Now now, hurry hurry.”

Tifelia was half teasing Ryua by pushing her back. Tifelia was aimlessly swaying.

Thinking that, she got dizzy. In the next moment, Tifelia collapsed.

“Eh-”

Turning around, Ryua saw it. Tifelia was sweating profusely and breathing painfully. The Colosseum made a commotion.

"Haa…Haaa…a-u…"

She somehow stood up, and again she felt dizzy and falteringly fell down. Amane and Rupee, whose wounds were healed, supported her and stood her up.

"What's with this? She has such a terrible fever!"

Amane held her hand to Tifelia's forehead.

Tifelia's breathing started to roughen, Rupee applied a status abnormality recovery magic on her, but the situation didn't change.

"No, thinking about it, there is no meaning in doing it…her status abnormality resistance should've been able to resist it."

——at once, one person from the spectator seats noticed 'them'.

Pointing his finger to the sky and shouting, what he pointed at was the countless shadows of Pterosaurs.

One of the beast's wings was abnormally wide, there was something strange looking mixed in.

"Y-your majesty! A swarm of monsters!"

"Don't panic! Deploy all hands to combat stations! In accordance to the plan, the people on standby, don't be negligent on taking the spectators to the refuge! Hurry!"

The king's bodyguard, Kirkton, was giving orders.

In accordance to the plan, a large force of soldiers came in from behind the spectator seats.

Before the chaos intensified, the spectators were to be peacefully guided.

However, screams buried the whole colosseum, running out of time, it didn't go well.

If it's like that, then the guiding was useless.

The soldiers were pushed aside and the crowd ran up to the exit.

"Monsters! Monsters! Oi, get out of the way!"

"No way, don't push!"

"Just was is with that!? What are the Kingdom's defenses doing!?"

At the center of the chaos, the bowmen soldiers struck back, but they weren't able to hit the moving targets.

With sharp talons and a large build, it crushed the soldiers, scattering fresh blood.

[A swarm of <Wind Dragon>s appeared! HP: 4339]

[A cluster of <Dragon Blaze> appeared! HP: 3471]

[A flock of <Red Scissors> appeared! HP: 1755]

[A herd of <Kaiser Eagle> appeared! HP: 3210]

Dragon. Insect. Bird.

They were all of different races, but they each possessed wings and a merciless attitude towards the fleeing prey.

Moreover, among those monsters there are 3 people with their respective shadows.

“The signal looked like it was really late but-”

“Isn’t it fine? Even the Master Knight was sealed and all that was left are the small fries, right? More than that, I’m aching to fight with that rumored Dragon Hunter.”

“Aaa, shut up shut up shut up. I can’t hear my cute bugs’ flapping wings.”

Among the 3, one shadow flew forwards with red scissors, scaring the escaping spectators.

Credits

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